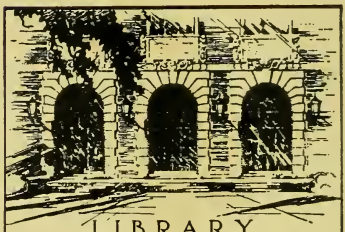
Eliza Giffard.



LIBRARY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY
OF ILLINOIS
823
H978m
v.2

The person charging this material is responsible for its return to the library from which it was withdrawn on or before the **Latest Date** stamped below.

Theft, mutilation, and underlining of books are reasons for disciplinary action and may result in dismissal from the University.

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS LIBRARY AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

BUILDING USE ONLY

L161—O-1096

THE

MISER MARRIED.

J. G. Barnard, Printer, Skinner-street, London.

Eliza Giffard
Marquis
Flintshire

THE

MISER MARRIED.

A Novel.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY

CATHERINE HUTTON.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR LONGMAN, HURST, REES, ORME, AND BROWN,
PATERNOSTER ROW.

1813.

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2010 with funding from
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

http://www.archive.org/details/misermarriednove02hutt

823
H978m
v.3

THE

MISER MARRIED.

LETTER XXIX.

TO MISS CASTLEMAIN.

Winterdale, June 20, 1812.

MY DEAR HARRIET,

THERE is something in the name of wife which allows privileges unknown to us maidens. A wife assumes a kind of consequence, an intrepidity, a daring, that is totally out of our sphere and practice. It is almost worth while to

get married, to see if one should acquire it. I wonder whether it would be pleasant to feel one's timidity, one's fear of offending, and one's desire to please, giving way to a spirit of independence, and a heedlessness whether one pleased or not; and whether this mighty change takes place all at once, or by degrees! I must certainly marry, to find it out; but I think I shall be a little upon my guard that the transformation do not happen too suddenly.

With respect to my mother, it is no new thing. Placed a second time in the situation of a wife, she has only to resume her former manners. I remember her behaviour to Sir George. He had been struck with her beauty, and, when that became familiar, her good humour gave him no cause to repent; and she made him what is called a good wife. But they both loved company

and amusements; and, as their tastes were the same, there was little ground for contention. Nothing can be more opposite than her's and Mr. Winterdale's, whose only passion is to hoard money; a thing she never thought of.

I told you, in my last, of my mother's announcing her intention of going to church. We went; and, when the service was ended, she sent Robert to Mrs. Thacker, to request to speak with her, in her pew. She accosted her with all the freedom of an old friend, and proposed taking her to the hall, to dinner. By this time Mr. Thacker had joined us, and we walked out of the church together.

"Mr. Thacker," said his wife, "Lady Winterdale is so *wasly* obliging, that she *vishes* to take me *vith* her to dinner; but I don't see how I can *possably* go.

"Nor I, neither," said her husband.

"But if Mr. Winterdale *is* a strange *bein*, I don't know why I should mind him, when her ladyship is so *very* good as to *invite* me. It would be very hard, indeed, if a lady might not notice her friends, without asking leave of her husband."

"But, besides his constant ill usage, for so many years, you forget the recent affront he has offered me in his marriage."

No, I don't *forgit* it; I remember that *very* well; but when Lady Winterdale is so kind as to ask me, and it was my place to go, if I had not been asked, it would be monstrous rude of me to refuse."

I wish I could have the pleasure of your company, Mr. Thacker, said my mother; but you men are so obstinate and unforgiving, that I am obliged to

let you have your own way. Mrs. Thacker shall not refuse me, however; nor you, Mr. Sharp: for you have more of the gentle spirit of our sex in you, than the boisterous notions of your own."

"O, dear, Ma'am," replied Mr. Sharp, "I *niver* was one of those cursing, swearing, *robustical* gentlemen, that make *ivery* body afraid of them. I'm sure I am very much obliged to you for your good opinion of me. I should be extremely happy to dine with your ladyship, if Mr. Winterdale was not at home; but really he is *sich* a lonely gentleman that I should be quite frightened to go to visit him, unless it was by his own particular invitation. I should be afraid he would not be partial to seeing of me."

"Nothing more likely," said my mother. "If my friends wait for his in-

vitation, I must live the life of a hermit, as he does: but do not you think I am able to protect you, if he should look a little sullen?"

"O, dear, yes, Ma'am, certainly," replied Mr. Sharp, "I'm sure I should *niver* be afraid of any *think* in the world, if your ladyship stood by me: but I hope the gentleman won't be very cross."

"I will not take upon me to answer for that," said my mother. "As you observe, he is not used to company: and it will take some time to reconcile him to it;---but, you know, you are not his visitor, but mine."

"O, dear," said Mr. Sharp, "I always thought that *whativer* was the wife's was the husband's!"

"That is not the case in London; is it, Mrs. Thacker," demanded my mother? "You know, there, if we do not

both like the same thing, we each please ourselves."

"To be sure we do," said Mrs. Thacker, "and so we do in the country. If my husband was such an unreasonable brute as not to like my *visitors*, he might shut himself up in his study, and we could do *very* well without him. I'm sure I shall accompany your ladyship *vith* a *vast* deal of pleasure. I am not afraid of Mr. Winterdale's looks, nor his words neither."

"Then why should I be afraid," said Mr. Sharp? "I have done *nothink* to offend him! And so, Ma'am I will have the honour of doing myself the pleasure of attending your ladyship, and the young ladies.

When we entered the drawing-room at the Hall, "Mr. Winterdale," said my mother, "I have prevailed on Mrs. Thacker and Mr. Sharp to dine with

us to-day. They expressed some apprehensions that their company might not be agreeable to you; but I assured them you would always be glad to see my friends." Then, turning to his son, without giving him time to reply, she said, "Mrs. Thacker, Henry. I need not introduce Mr. Sharp to you; because you have met him at the Lodge."

A conversation then ensued, in which my mother talked with her usual ease; Mr. Winterdale said nothing; and Henry, Eleanor, and myself, rather bore a part, from the idea that it was necessary, than any inclination we felt to speak. Mr. Sharp was really frightened, and said little: Mrs. Thacker said a great deal, to shew she was not frightened.

At dinner my mother shewed a kind attention both to her husband and her guests. Mr. Winterdale was perfectly

silent; but his looks were expressive of great displeasure.

When the cloth was removed, and the servants had left the room, Mrs. Thacker began by saying, "upon my word, your ladyship managed *wery clewerly*, when Mr. Thacker and we pumped you about the intended bride. When we came to the Lodge we thought it morally *impossable* it could be any body but you; and yet you almost *convinced* us it was not, for all you did not deny it. For my part, I should have denied it, plump."

"I do not like to tell a downright untruth, if I can help it," said my mother.

Mr. Winterdale, who had hitherto not opened his mouth, except for the purposes of eating and drinking, now said, "People have no occasion to lye,

when they have the impudence of the devil."

As this was addressed to nobody, nobody answered it.

"I thought, to be sure," said Mr. Sharp, "I could have got it all out of the young ladies. I *niver* was so surprised in all my life. I thought ladies always loved to talk."

"When gentlemen talk a great deal," said I, "there is less occasion for it."

"I must own and confess," resumed Mr. Sharp, "that I did use *ivery* argument in my power. Nay, I even went so far," continued he, addressing himself to Henry, "as to talk of marrying them; but all would not do: they were as hard as native rocks."

"If I had the presumption to think of marrying either, it would not be as a bribe to her," said Henry; "but as

the greatest happiness that could befall myself."

"You may drop the presumption, Henry," said his father, "and that is the light in which most men would see it."

"O dear, Sir," said Mr. Sharp, "and so should I see it. I think there are not two sweeter, *bootifuller*, *sensibler* young ladies in the world. I do not know their *equils*."

Eleanor and I could not help laughing at our own panegyric.

"I beg you will add discreeter," said I. "Though discretion is a virtue you do not seem inclined to bestow upon women, you cannot refuse it to us, who kept our secret in spite of all your offers and entreaties."

"Ah!" said Mrs. Thacker, "you have not been tried! You knew Mr. Sharp was only in joke. Let me see

the *voman* that could ever refuse him, if he was *serus*."

"O dear, Aunt, I wonder at you," cried Mr. Sharp. "I vow you make me quite ashamed! I'm sure I don't believe there's *iver* a *bootiful*, sensible, discreet young lady in all the world, that would have me, if I was to ask her."

Eleanor and I silently subscribed to the truth of his opinion.

"You are so faint-hearted," said Mrs. Thacker. "Don't you know that *faint heart never won fair lady?* If I was as you, I'd strike up to them, boldly."

"Women do not want boldness, if men do," said Mr. Winterdale.

"A little proper spirit is *very* necessary in *vomen*," said Mrs. Thacker, "or they might be trampled under foot. Men are not all so good natured as Mr. Sharp."

This was a challenge; but Mr. Winterdale made no reply. My mother did. She said, "That those men who had not the easiness of Mr. Sharp's temper might have some of the stronger virtues; but that mildness was always becoming in a woman."

Henry's eyes beamed with pleasure at my mother's rebuke of the unfeeling Mrs. Thacker, who seemed a little disconcerted; imagining, at least, that she was paying her court to my mother, by assisting her to train her husband—if not invited for that very purpose. She said, "When gentlemen behaved themselves like gentlemen, she could be as mild as any body."

"And when they do not," said Eleanor, "gentleness of manners in a woman may be one of the best means to reform them."

"Yes," said Mr. Winterdale, "you unmarried women talk very prettily about mildness and gentleness, and some of you practice it too; but once get husbands, and you are a parcel of dragons. In future, I should fear to trust the best of you."

"When I am married," said I, "my greatest pleasure will be to oblige my husband. I would prevent his very wishes. But then I think he ought to sacrifice something to mine. If my compliance led him to seek his own gratification, and exact those attentions as a right, which I should feel such pleasure in paying him spontaneously, the mere doctrine of duty and obedience would not carry me so far as my own inclination would have done without it."

"No man above the condition of an

American Indian could think of exacting obedience from an amiable, enlightened woman," said Henry.

"No, faith," said his father; "he ought to be thankful if the amiable, enlightened woman did not exact obedience from him."

"If she did it would be worse still," said I.

"Much worse," rejoined Mr. Winterdale; "but not more unlikely. However, I believe, Charlotte, you are one of the best of them."

"O dear, Sir," said Mr. Sharp, "pray do not forget Miss Mowbray. I'm sure, if I was obliged to go to say which was the best, I should find it the *difficultest* thing that *iver* I did in all my life."

"I can tell you a way to solve the difficulty at once," said I.

"And pray what is that," demanded Mr. Sharp?

"Find out which has the best fortune," replied I.

"That might not be the easiest thing in all the world," said Mr. Sharp.

"You have made a very shrewd observation," said I. "It is not quite determined what mine is to be; but, when it is settled, I appeal to Mr. Winterdale, if that should not decide the preference, when all other things are equal."

"It should," said Mr. Winterdale, "and I believe it may be decided now; for there can be no doubt of your title to the Montgomery estate."

"Does any body dispute your title?" asked Mrs. Thacker.

"A distant relation does," replied I, "and the affair is now in Chancery."

"O, shocking," exclaimed Mrs.

Thacker. "Well! I *now* its most abominable! And so you don't know yet whether the estate is your own or no?"

"None of us can tell," answered I, "till my Lord Chancellor has the goodness to inform us; and I am told he sometimes makes people wait a long while for such information."

"O dear, O dear! I'm sure I pity you," said Mr. Sharp. "If I had a Chancery suit, I should *niver* sleep o'nights."

"Miss Montgomery has put you in a way then," said Henry, "to determine which of the two ladies you like best."

"O dear, O dear! she has, indeed," said Mr. Sharp. "I'm sure I would not marry any lady in all the world, with a Chancery suit."

"Why not, Sir?" said Mr. Winterdale, who had not spoken to him before.

Mr. Sharp started at the abruptness of the question, and seemed at a loss for a reply. After a little hesitation, he said, "Why, Sir, I should be frightened at it."

"What is there frightful in it?" demanded Mr. Winterdale.

"Indeed, Sir, I don't know," answered Mr. Sharp; "but I always understood there was something very terrible in going to law."

"I never found it," said Mr. Winterdale; and I have been at law many times. For my own part, I think there is something very pleasant in obtaining one's rights, and trouncing those who invade them."

"Very pleasant, indeed," said Mr. Sharp; "only I suppose it takes a good deal of time and money to do it."

"I suppose you waste your time and money at cards: if you do not, many

people do, and never think about either," said Mr. Winterdale.

"I do play at cards sometimes, to be sure," rejoined Mr. Sharp; "but, if I may go to take the liberty to say so, one knows what one stakes; and that's more than he does that goes to law."

"And more than the gamester does," said Mr. Winterdale. "Does not good fortune tempt him, and ill fortune goad him to his ruin? Law can do no more."

"Very true, Sir," said Mr. Sharp; "but there is some *amoosment* in cards."

"I find an amusement," said Mr. Winterdale, "in punishing a rascal who injures, or endeavours to cheat me—though," continued he, looking steadfastly at Mrs. Thacker, "one does not always succeed as one ought."

This was a challenge which the lady had prudence enough to decline. Had

she made a spirited reply to it, I should have expected to have seen her handed out of the room, with some earnestness.

"However," continued Mr. Winterdale, finding it did not take effect, "there can be no doubt, but I shall make your scoundrel repent, Charlotte, and you have only to wait till then, to be mor amiable than Miss Mowbray."

Mr. Winterdale does not know that Montgomery is the son of my adversary. Having drank his usual quantity of wine, he rose from table without ceremony. We went into the drawing-room at the same time, where Henry and Mr. Sharp soon joined us; but we saw no more of Mr. Winterdale till our visiters were gone.

At supper Mr. Winterdale was silent. When it was over, addressing himself to my mother, he said, "Lady Winterdale, I want to have a little conversa-

tion with you; and, if possible, let us argue the matter coolly."

"Now you have once brought yourself to be cool," my dear Mr. Winterdale," said my mother, "I have hopes of you. You may depend upon my coolness, I assure you. And now," drawing her chair close to his, and laying her hand on his arm, Now let us begin."

"Did not you give up the company of the Thackers while I was at the Lodge?"

"Nay, we are going over the same ground again. Give me leave to answer your question by another.—Will you do me the favour to break your leg?"

"Is a man entitled to no consideration; no respect, no indulgence, if he have not a broken leg?"

"I must reply to you now; or our

catechism will be all questions, and no answers. A man is entitled to some consideration, respect, and so forth, if his legs are whole; but not of the same kind, or in the same degree, as if one of them should be broken. The fractured leg, being an alarming circumstance, and, further, being only a temporary one, may demand the sacrifice of a woman's time and amusements; but, when two friends, married or otherwise (for married folks should still be friends), can each stand upon their own legs, I think they have a right to run away from each other sometimes, and that it is better for them to do so."

"Such being your opinion, why did you not declare it to me at the Lodge, that I might have known whether our sentiments agreed, before it was too late? But you knew they did not

agree: you knew you were imposing upon me: you knew I was determined against all company. I had reason to believe, from the life you led, and the fine stories you told, that you liked it as little as myself. Now you do not blush to own, not only that you like company, but that you will have it."

"Stop, Mr. Winterdale. If you make your speech much longer, I shall never remember the whole of it. You say first, that I should have acquainted you with all my inclinations and propensities, that, in case there should have been any one among them you did not approve, you might have escaped the misfortune of marrying me. Now I have as happy a talent at asking questions as yourself; and I might enquire whether you made a candid confession to me of all that I may hereafter deem

amiss in you. But I need not. I will only ask, was there ever yet a woman who loved, and, consequently wished to please the man she loved, that did not involuntarily shew him that side of her character which she thought would please him most?"

"So far women may be right; for if he saw both sides, no man in his senses would ever marry."

"With regard to company, I prefer your's to all the world: next to your's, I prefer my Charlotte's, my Eleanor's, and my Henry's; but one cannot always surfeit upon sweets. One must have something one likes less, to ascertain the value of what one prizes most."

"Then the worse, the better for your purpose, I suppose; and you are lucky in meeting with that brazen-faced, ignorant fishwoman, Madam Thacker,

and that linsey woolsey, paper-skulled, puppy, Sharp. You should have brought the scoundrel parson; as being the vilest of God's works upon earth. But, perhaps, you could not get him."

"I have no need of such people as the Thacker family to remind me of your superior advantages. I am very sorry they are so little interesting. I wish they were agreeable people, and that there were more such; they would never, in my opinion, come into competition with you. But one cannot make ones neighbours and acquaintance: one is obliged to take them as one finds them."

"Audacious, unfeeling woman! argument is vain: I therefore tell you plainly I will be master of my own house, and I will neither have Montgomeries, Thackers, or any other visitors in it."

"Your openness calls forth mine. I do not dispute your consequence in your own house; but I chuse to be mistress of my own conduct. At present I have only claimed the common privileges of going to church, and enjoying the company of my relation, and my neighbours. It will be well if I stop there."

"You will not stop there. This is your first essay. You have married for a home; for a convenience. The affection you shewed was a mere pretence; a bait, to catch me. Now your arts have succeeded, you drop the mask; you shew yourself in your proper colours, which were carefully hidden before."

"Mr. Winterdale, you forget that you promised to be cool. I am as determined as yourself; though not so irritable; and I think I am more reason-

able; as I only wish to regulate my own conduct, while you wish to regulate your's and mine. If I out-step the bounds of decency and propriety, you have a right to interfere: while I keep within them, let me go where I like, and receive whom I like. No rational being should be entirely dependent on another; though the one should happen to be a woman, and the other a man; or though the two should happen to be man and wife."

"Then, in spite of the authority, the inclination, and the absolute commands of your husband, you are determined to associate with the Thackers, and all the other miscreants you can find?"

"I am determined to associate with the Thackers, and all other people of character and condition whom I may

chuse. If my acquaintance are not of that description, interpose with your authority; it will then be displayed in its proper place: if they are, my inclination ought to take place of your's, on such a subject. And as to commands—I told you before I did not like the word. I would not make use of it, even to a servant."

"If then I am to meet with no redress from you, whence it ought to proceed, I must have recourse to others, by whom I shall be minded, I will give positive orders to my servants to admit nobody."

"Your servants cannot always guard the citadel: mine will sometimes be upon duty; and all will find their account in serving their mistress."

"I will discharge every servant within the walls that dares to disobey me."

"And get others in their places who will do the same—Come, come, Mr.

Winterdale, you had better not resort to such violent measures; and, when you are *perfectly* cool, I am persuaded you will not. You are so fortunate as to have excellent servants—do not change them for worse. You are a good master, or they would not have remained so long with you—do not incur the disgrace and inconvenience of becoming a bad one. Besides, in that case, you make the world judge between us, which will be sure to determine in my favour. It is wisest to agree upon these little matters between ourselves, without allowing that officious meddler called the world, to have any share in them. And, last of all, though first in consequence—do not put me upon seeking to counteract you; upon rambling from home, in search of society, upon trying how far I can go

in opposition to you; but rather let me find a pleasure in your company, among the rest, and greater than the rest.

"And now, my dear Mr. Winterdale," continued my mother, holding out her hand, "as we have spoken our minds to each other, with the sincerity of real friends, let us be friends in good earnest; and do not divert me from my purpose of making you a most excellent wife."

Mr. Winterdale took her hand, though with some reluctance, saying, "Good God! what inexplicable creatures women are! To please us, they assume a shape which is not their own; we embrace the phantom, and think it perfect. It changes, in our arms, to an opposite form, and they have the art to make us almost think that perfect too! I thought I had known something of

you," added he. "I had a wife once, who would have burst into tears, and given up every wish of her heart, before I had said half so much to her as I have said to you."

A sigh stole from Henry's bosom, which Eleanor and I each greeted with a sigh, in return.

Harriet, what do you think of my mother's logic? I confess it has bewildered me, as well as poor Mr. Winterdale. It reminds me of the eloquence of one of the great personages in Milton, which

Could make the worse appear the better cause.

I am sure that, in my heart, I think her wrong, and yet her arguments appear to be right. I think her husband wrong too; so, between both, I know not what to make of it. That they

may jumble and clash, till each becomes nearer right, according to the notion of Mr. Henry Winterdale, is the wish of

Your

CHARLOTTE MONTGOMERY.

LETTER XXX.

TO MISS CASTLEMAIN.

Winterdale, June 27, 1812.

MY DEAR HARRIET,

No further cloud has arisen, to shade the lustre of Mr. Winterdale's and my mother's honey moon. She is gentle, kind, and attentive; and he is not very ungentle, unkind, or repulsive; which is saying much for him.

My mother has returned the visit of Mrs. Thacker: but it seemed the tacit agreement of both parties that no notice should be taken of it. She neither said where she was going, where she had been, or related any circumstance that occurred at the vicarage: and he made no enquiries. That he was not

pleased, his looks avowed; but he has found contradiction unavailing.

We had the satisfaction of leaving Mr. Winterdale in good company; that of his privy counsellor, Mr. Foreclose, a mean, cringing, prating attorney; and their subject of conversation was most interesting; the merits of Sir James's claim to the Montgomery estate. We left them, seated at a table, covered with papers; discussing the validity of reversions and remainders; and we found them there on our return, with remainders enough for another hour, and reversions for another time.

By the way, this Mr. Foreclose has a pretty place of it at Winterdale hall. If I may judge from his appearance and abilities, his frequent visits will not much interfere with his other practice; and he seems to be invested with the

privilege of selling as many of his idle hours as he pleases to Mr. Winterdale; of breakfasting and dining here, whenever it suits his convenience, and placing it to account. I believe he evinces his gratitude to his employer, in the same manner that is practised by gypsies, and other foretellers of events; he seldom shocks his ear by unwelcome prognostications. I have a notion that all Mr. Winterdale's causes, whether offensive or defensive, are incontrovertibly right; and if the right be not proved by the decision, the judges and juries are unquestionably wrong. Thus the ingenious Mr. Foreclose pays for the mutton he eats to day, and secures mutton for to-morrow.

I have made another discovery. Mr. Winterdale, with all his fancied independence, and boasted domination, is not only the dupe of this crooked

limb of the law, but he is under the management of his own servant. I always considered there was something unaccountable in a man of his parsimonious and domineering temper, being a good master. Upon a nearer view, my dear, I have discovered that he is not a good master; that he is suspicious and overbearing. How then, say you, can the superior Mendall, the honest Stable, and the artless Ralph, have lived with him so long? I have found that out also, and I will tell you.

Mendall is completely his master. He has the good sense to let Mr. Winterdale vapour, and bluster, and retain the belief of his own authority; but his opinions, given in the form of advice, and with the respectful air of a servant, generally prevail. You will say this remains to be accounted for. It is

done in a word. Mendall is a truly valuable man, and has made himself so necessary to his master, that he consents to any thing, rather than harbour an idea of parting with him.

This is natural enough in a man so destitute of other attachments as Mr. Winterdale; but the singularity is that Mendall does not abuse his master's favour, by making it subservient to his own interests and passions; but employs his influence for the good of the rest.

Long acquaintance and confidence have proved to Mr. Winterdale that his servant is incorruptible; he, therefore, is satisfied with his conduct; and, knowing that he would not suffer the others to betray him, he is satisfied with their conduct, while under his inspection. With regard to the other servants, they have only to obey the

authority of their master, as it is delegated to Mendall; and it is exercised in so reasonable a manner, that they cannot but be pleased with their duty.

I dwell with some pleasure on this subject, because I have seen favourite servants, *drest in a little brief authority*, servile to the master or mistress from whom they derived it, and tyrannical and capricious to those who were unfortunately placed under it. Mendall is the reverse. Though he is respectful to his master, he does not spare him; and, though he will not countenance the faults of his fellow-servants, he is indulgent to their trivial errors. The master regards him as a shield against their plunder; and the servants as a bulwark against his oppression.

My dear Harriet, what shall I do with Montgomery? I cannot manage these men as my mother does—*Alas!*

because I love! He looks uneasy, melancholy. He has dined with us once, and Mr. Winterdale's behaviour to him, though not cordial, was not rude, which was all that could be expected from him. I believe he thinks ill of my mother. He does not treat her with that unaffected kindness and respect, that flowed from his heart, unknown to himself, before my unreserved confessions. She, herself, perceives it, and has asked me the cause, which I did not choose to explain. But if his farther knowledge of her has lowered her in his esteem, that does not extend to me. On the contrary, he told me her share of the fault lessened mine; and his looks still confess his tenderness; though it is mingled with a melancholy for which I cannot account.

Is he afraid of Henry Winterdale? I have some suspicions that Mr. Win-

terdale has his eye upon the Montgomery estate for his son, when it shall be awarded to me; of which event he does not entertain a doubt. He unbends himself more to me than even to my mother, and speaks to me in a tone that borders on affection. I have not the vanity to imagine that any other merit of mine than what is attached to my woods, and arable and pasture lands, could move the heart of Mr. Winterdale in my favour. If Montgomery has observed this kindness, and it is probable it might not escape the keen eye of a lover, he may have some cause to fear.

With regard to Henry, I know not whether even the keen eye of a lover could penetrate into his heart. Love seems the spring of his behaviour both to me and Eleanor; but to love us both must be reserved for Mr. Sharp alone.

There are moments, however, when he is off his guard ; and in these, his attachment to Eleanor is clear to me, though she will not allow it.

My own behaviour is such as would counteract the idea of Henry being his rival, in the breast of Montgomery, open and frank to both. I have concealed nothing from the latter ; and I hope my countenance shews I have nothing to conceal. Not so Montgomery. He looks sad ; I ask him the cause, and he is silent.

This love is a delightful sensation, Harriet ; but, in one way or other, I believe the men always make us pay for it. Nothing is so high a price, as to suffer for their inconstancy. May I never be called on to pay this; for ill, very ill, should I bear it. Want of confidence is not a trifle ; especially to me, who abhor every kind of reserve,

as being the first step towards dissimulation. I will consider it as a trial of my patience; a virtue that, if I marry, I suppose I shall find sufficient cause to excercise.

I will not, at present, put your's to any farther proof, but assure you that I am

Your ever affectionate,

CHARLOTTE MONTGOMERY.

LETTER XXXI.

TO MISS CASTLEMAIN,

Winterdale, July 4, 1812.

MY DEAR HARRIET,

THE melancholy of Montgomery continues; but the cause is no longer a secret. He has informed his father, by letter, of his accidental acquaintance with my mother and myself, and his consequent attachment to me. It needed not the eloquence of a lover, to paint the advantages which would result from the union of two contending branches of the same family. The certainty of the title and estate not being divided, and the delivering the latter from the gripe of the law, are circumstances not to

be overlooked by Sir James, the woman out of the question.

But, my friend I am not out of the question. I have turned the scale against myself. The indiscretion of your Charlotte has sunk her so low, that her chance of the Montgomery estate cannot raise her to the level of the present claimant.

As I sat this morning at one of the windows of our drawing room, I saw my mother and Eleanor walking in the park, attended by Montgomery. He looked up, and bowed, and I hastened to join them. We had not walked far before my mother complained of fatigue, and sat down under a tree. Eleanor seated herself by her, while Montgomery and I pursued our walk, on my mother saying we should find her there, on our return.

"Montgomery," said I, when we

were out of hearing, "you assure me of your regard, and I cannot doubt your sincerity; but you think me unworthy of your confidence. Something preys upon your mind, of which you will not allow me a share. It is unkind to put me upon making professions, either of secrecy, or the interest I take in your concerns,

"My Charlotte," replied he, "I have not words to express my opinion of your worth, or my gratitude for the hopes you have given me; but these serve only to render my situation the more painful."

"Good God!" cried I, "what can be the matter? Tell me, instantly; for I will not be trifled with."

"I have acquainted my father with my meeting Lady Montgomery and yourself at the assembly; of my being allowed to visit you; of my unaltera-

ble affection for you; and I have not been silent on the excellencies of your character, and the advantages of such a connexion."—He stopped.

"Go on," said I.

"I cannot."

"Then I will tell the rest. Sir James has heard of my misconduct; and the estate in litigation will not bribe him to accept of me as his daughter."

Still Montgomery was silent, and I proceeded.

"By the accusations of my own heart, I might judge of those I should meet with from a stranger. You, yourself, have not acquitted, you have only pardoned me. Sir James, whom partiality does not bias towards mercy, abides by the decision of justice, which condemns me. I always felt a repugnance to the steps that, it appeared to

me necessity compelled me to take; but I never saw them in their true light, till the means to retrieve them were contested; and I never felt their force, till"—I hesitated—He put my arm in his, and fixing his eyes eagerly upon mine.—"Till when," he cried?

"Till I feared they would degrade me in your estimation," said I, lowering my eyes, that they might not encounter his.

"To know you is to love you; and the more to know, the more to love you," said Montgomery. "Never did you appear so amiable in my sight as at this moment. Were my father here, he would solicit you in my behalf with as much sincerity as I would myself."

"I can acknowledge my errors to your father," said I; "but I cannot sue to him. It would be meanness."

"Forbid it Heaven!" said Montgo-

mery. "Knowing you as I do, he would sue to you; but, knowing you from the only blameable action of your life, and that much exaggerated, he has conceived a prejudice against you that, perhaps, none but yourself can remove. There is a way, continued he—but I dare not propose it."

"Speak freely," said I, "and I will deny you as freely, if I cannot approve it."

"Could you condescend to be mine without his knowledge?

"Never," replied I; "unless I brought the Montgomery estate in my hand."

"In waiting to know which of us must bestow it," rejoined Montgomery, "our best years may be flown. My father and Mr. Winterdale are equally positive on opposite sides. My only

pleasure would be to share it with you, to whomsoever it may belong. Had we no prejudice to contend with, the way would be open before us; but we have my father's firm persuasion of his right, and the impression of a story, the joint fabrication of truth and malice, or, what is just as mischievous, truth and common report, against us. That I shall make every effort to counteract this, in my father's breast, is certain; but all I can urge, truth itself, will be placed to the account of hood-winked love. Were you mine, were I once allowed to introduce you to him, every ill impression would vanish before your virtues and your graces, like the vapour of the night before the morning sun."

"Ah! Montgomery," said I, "I behold the hood-winked lover now! My pride, however, forbids the trial. Were

I your inferior, I will not say that I might not be prevailed upon by mutual love to enter clandestinely into your family; for I am not certain how far the controul of a parent reaches in matters on which the happiness of the child depends—but, of your own blood; undoubted heiress of a splendid fortune, till your father stepped forward to dispute it; and, let the dispute terminate as it may, the natural, and, therefore, rightful, inheritrix of the patrimony of my father, I will not become the wife of Sir James's son, without his consent."

"Dear Charlotte," said Montgomery, "if pride can be just, your's is so; but consider what you sacrifice to it. The felicity of my future days depends upon my passing them with you---why abridge it, by subtracting from their number?---why not permit me to pro-

mote your happiness, by every unremitting effort of my life?---why not give me an opportunity to convince my father of the false estimate he has made of your character?---and, why not rescue the estate which must be the property of one, or both of us, from the iron fangs of the law."

"You perplex, but you do not convince me," answered I. "At present I could not agree to your proposal without a journey into the north, which nothing should prevail upon me to undertake. Employ the interval between now, and the time when the law will allow me to be at my own disposal, in endeavouring to soften your father; not by justifying, or palliating my former conduct; but by representing to him my detestation and repentance of it. During this period, let the retainers of the law reap their harvest. At

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS LIBRARY

the end of it, as we shall neither of us be responsible for our actions to any one; if you dare take me, with my debts on one side, and my chance of being able to pay them on the other; here is my hand," said I, presenting it to him, with a smile---" I may be your's---but, mind, I do not promise." He took my hand with rapture.

" Not only *may*, but *must*, my Charlotte. This hand, that smile, conveyed your promise, and the world contains nothing that could tempt me to relinquish it."

" Now," said I, looking back, and seeing my mother and Eleanor still seated. " Now, let us rejoin Lady Winterdale."

" One moment," said Montgomery, " and I have done. My profession will soon oblige me to quit this part of the country; to leave you an inhabitant of

the same house with a man who has every advantage of mind and person to recommend him. May I be at ease on this subject?"

"You may," replied I. "There is a great affection between Henry Winterdale and myself; but it is not of the kind to give you pain."

"Will you allow me to speak without reserve?"

"I not only allow, but desire it."

"Mr. Winterdale's is a heart so little susceptible of friendship that I think even you, lovely and amiable as you are, could not have made an impression on it; yet there is a comparative softness in his manner, when he addresses you. I can no otherwise account for this than by his designing you for his son."

"I have been struck with the same idea," replied I; "but no other founda-

tion than yourself. It is certain, however, if there be any truth in it, that the charms of my father's estate have subdued his heart."

"They would have their weight on such a heart as Mr. Winterdale's, undoubtedly; but, whatever may be his inducement, I have every thing to fear that can be accomplished by his influence."

"Montgomery," said I, "surely you forget yourself. What is the influence of Mr. Winterdale over me?"

"Pardon my weakness," said he. "Where I have so much at stake, I may not see things through their proper medium. How can I forsee what may be effected by opportunity and perseverance? I leave you exposed to every effort he can make in favour of his son, without knowing what those efforts may be: but, more than this, I

leave you in the company of his son. If I can judge impartially, there is but one circumstance that can possibly prevent his becoming my rival, if he be not such, already. No man, my Charlotte, that has a heart, can be domesticated with you, but must love you; unless that heart were given to another. My only hope is in Eleanor. I have scrutinized his behaviour to you both; but I cannot determine to which he gives the preference."

"If you were not so serious I should laugh at you," said I. "Are all men to love me, who do not love my cousin? Your medium is, indeed, a false one; but, as it embellishes, as well as magnifies objects, I would have you continue to see me through it as long as you live. On these subjects women are endowed with a sort of instinctive faculty that outstrips the reason and

acute observation of you men. You have exercised these in vain, to discover whether Henry Winterdale love Eleanor or me. My prescience can assure you that he loves her; though he has not yet told it, even to herself."

"And now," continued I, "having set your mind at rest, I will, as we walk back, mention to you a circumstance, on which mine is not so."

"I do not like the profession of a soldier. I acknowledge your red coat and gold epaulets had a very powerful effect upon me at a country assembly, and it was no small matter of exultation that I danced with them; but if ever I should be induced to think of passing my life with you, I should see them in a different light. I am a flaming patriot, and burn most furiously with the love of my country; but you will pardon me if I confess that I should love my husband better, and should be loth to part with

him, when my country called."

"My profession is not my own choice," said Montgomery. My father proposed it merely as a resource to a man whose fortune was yet undetermined, and who knew not how to live according to his rank; besides, if my inclination pointed to it, which it does not, I embraced it too late in life. At five and twenty one has not time to make ones way in it; and one's mind does not easily adopt the necessary system of subordination that runs through the army; a system which approaches nearer to tyranny on one hand, and servility on the other, than suits my disposition. The age of my being gratified with a red coat is past; but I might render myself useful to my country in a way that would not divide me from my Charlotte. I might cultivate some of its lands, if that agreed with her notions of patriotism."

"The very thing I wished!" cried I. "Agriculture is the noblest of all employments, as well as the most favourable to the morals. Let the soldier talk of honour and glory—I see more honour in covering the earth with grain and verdure, than with dead and mangled bodies; and more glory in providing for the subsistence of our fellow creatures, than in destroying them."

By this time we joined my mother and Eleanor, and returned home.

Your's, very sincerely,

CHARLOTTE MONTGOMERY.

LETTER XXXII.

TO MISS CASTLEMAIN.

Winterdale, July 11, 1812.

MY DEAR HARRIET,

THE storm has at last burst over the head of my mother. I have been in daily expectation, since her marriage, of applications being made to Mr. Winterdale, for the payment of her debts; but the first happened only three days ago; when he entered the room, with an open letter in his hand, containing a bill due from Lady Montgomery to a linen-draper in London, of 250l, and requesting payment. His lips quivered; and his face was pale, with anger.

"Do you know any thing of this?" demanded he, presenting the letter to her.

My mother, after looking it slightly over, answered, "I believe I do."

"Do you owe the money," said Mr. Winterdale?

"I suppose so," replied my mother. "I never kept any account against these sort of people; but I dare say it is right."

I cannot now stain my paper with the language of Mr. Winterdale. Suffice it to say that he repeated, and exhausted, every oath and imprecation; every opprobious epithet; and every term of abuse, that his imagination could furnish. Eleanor and I were frightened, and rose to retire. He would not suffer us to leave the room; but obliged us to be seated; saying he would have us witnesses of the shame and dishonesty

of our mother and aunt. Poor Eleanor burst into tears, and I could scarcely refrain.

" Crocodiles as you are," said Mr. Winterdale, " weep on; your tears are only to betray!"

My mother sat, during the whole time, with a countenance undisturbed. She was silent, and grave; but her looks expressed neither fear or anger. When Mr. Winterdale's passion could no longer burn without fresh fuel, he stopped, and said, abruptly, to my mother, " Have you nothing to say?"

" You say so much," replied she, " that you give me no opportunity."

" Begin then," said he, with a curse, and try if you can cheat me again."

" I have no such intention," said my mother. " I am heartily sorry to displease you. I can only say I wanted the things, and could not do without them;

and I wish, with all my heart, I had been able to pay for them, myself; but, as I was not, that trouble must fall upon you."

"Have you the impudence to tell me this to my face," asked Mr. Winterdale?

"I do not know how to express myself more modestly," replied his lady. "I might, indeed, have requested it as a favour; but, I suppose, you would have objected even to that."

"Does the man live, or did he ever live, who, marrying an amiable, economical, solitary widow, found out that she had been extravagant; that she was in debt; that she had cheated him; that she had made his fortune answerable for sins committed before she knew him; and that justified these proceedings by saying, As I could not pay my debts, you must pay them for me; did you ever know such a man make no objection to

the conduct of his wife? Did he not rather abhor her, as an infamous woman, and dread her, lest she should prove his ruin?"

"I think," said my mother, "if your language were set against my actions, we should neither of us be much indebted to the other."

"I deny it," said Mr. Winterdale. "Words are but empty breath. Ten thousand of the worst of them would not equal the smallest of your actions. You have injured me deeply and substantially: my words hurt you not. You ought to be made to feel, by other means."

"You would not beat me, would you," "demanded his lady?"

"My situation in life prevents me," answered Mr. Winterdale; but if I were a cobler, I would not leave a white place upon your delicate skin"

"Well," said my mother, "cheap as words are, I think you have had two hundred and fifty pound's worth for your money. If you always meet with so good a bargain, you may be satisfied."

"I expect," said her husband, "I have more such bargains before me, if I do not fortunately run mad, and escape the knowledge of them. Is this the only sum you owe?"

"I am afraid it is not," replied my mother.

"I was afraid so too," said Mr. Winterdale. "Pray what may the whole of your Ladyship's debts amount to?"

"I cannot make the least conjecture," answered my mother. "As I have already told you, I never kept any account of them."

"More shame for you," said Mr. Winterdale! "You ought to have kept

an account of them; both to have prevented imposition in your creditors, and to have restricted yourself within the limits of your own fortune."

"It would have been well if I had," said my mother.

"It would have been well for me if I had never known you," rejoined her husband; "but, since, to my sorrow, I do—tell me, are there many of these debts?"

"There are more than I could wish," replied my mother. "I began to find the people very troublesome."

"Now," said Mr. Winterdale, "the name of Mereval is explained. I always thought it a piece of unnecessary prudence, to assume a feigned name, in order to avoid impertinent visitors; but it seems you had a motive more than I could divine; you were afraid your visitors should bring writs in their pockets.

And I, fool that I was! trusting to a pretty set of features, and a pretence of discretion and affection, together with your being the widow of a man of rank and fortune, blindly fell into your snare!"

"Mr. Winterdale," said my mother, "I spread no snares abroad to catch you. You found me in my own house."

"Every way to my misfortune, I did," replied he! "Would to God I had left you there! In mischief did our acquaintance begin, and mischief will mark the whole course of it!"

"Neither did I entrap you with any falsehood," said my mother. "I only did not confess all the truth. I loved you, and, therefore, I did not own what might have occasioned me to lose you."

"Most surely you would have lost me: or, rather, saved me," said Mr.

Winterdale. "But love was not your motive. Little as I know of love, I will pronounce it. Had you really loved me, you would rather have thrown yourself upon my generosity, by an open confession of your circumstances, than have forfeited my esteem for ever, by your concealment of them."

"I foresaw the event of that. Have you not this moment said, that an appeal to your generosity would have been vain? Did you not own that I should have lost you, if I had told the whole truth?"

"I did: and more honourable it had been for you to have done so, than to have fastened yourself upon me, that I might bear the weight of your debts; instead of yourself."

"But my arts, if such they were, were open to detection. Why did not Mr. Winterdale, learned in the law,

and, therefore, not ignorant that if he married a woman he took her debts along with her; why did not he enquire, why did not he endeavour to ascertain, whether his intended wife was free from debts?"

"The reason is plain," said Mr. Winterdale. "I was such a gull, such a gudgeon, that it never once entered my head you could be a shark. But, if I had doubted, to whom could I have applied for information? Could I have asked your own agent if Lady Montgomery were an impostor? or could I have called at every shop in Bond-street, and asked its master if Lady Montgomery owed him money? Dishonourable as your conduct has been, your behaviour, on its being brought to light, is, to as great a degree, shameless."

"I do not defend my conduct. I am

sorry to say it is indefensible. But, call it by one of the harshest names you can find; say I have over-reached you. Did you not intend to over-reach me?"

"I never deceived you in the smallest particular."

"Perhaps not, I do not accuse you of it: nor can you accuse me of downright fibbing. But did not you think you had an excellent bargain? Did not you secretly glory in being the gainer by a union, in which I, of course, must be the loser?"

"I did expect to gain an affectionate and a respectable companion, who would also be some advantage in a pecuniary point of view; but I used no underhand means to obtain her."

"You kept the pecuniary part of the matter to yourself, as well as I; and, had my situation been just what it appeared, you would have had great cause

to congratulate yourself on your policy. I mean no personal reflections; but, at my age; with my disposition, and the few attractions I still possess, I should never have thought of burying myself in the country, if I had been free from the debts which cause you this disturbance."

"Grant me patience, Heaven!" cried Mr. Winterdale, "while I hear this audacious woman acknowledge that she would not have married me, had she been worth having!"

"Pardon me. I do not exactly acknowledge that. I only mean to say that if you expected youth, that is, comparative youth, beauty, rank, and fortune, it was more than your share; and you ought not to repine at being disappointed of something. The whole amounts to this. You endeavoured to form an alliance, in which every cir-

cumstance should be in your own favour, and you believed you had done so; but it turns out that there is one against you."

"Lady Winterdale, the woman is more against me than the money she owes. You have the cunning, as well as wickedness, of Belzebub himself. I can give the whole amount, as well as you; and in three words. You cheat me; out-face me; and then upbraid me for not discovering your deceit. And was it for this, continued Mr. Winterdale, striking his forehead, was it for this that I have spent my days in the accumulation of riches! Have I been blessed with a dutiful son, and a trusty servant; the one making no claims upon my fortune, and the other assisting me to save it, to have it squandered by an unthinking, unfeeling woman, before I knew that she existed! Have I watched

with unremitting care to preserve pounds: and rushed blindfold into an abyss, in which I have sunk thousands!"

"Henry," said he to his son, who now entered the room, "This cockatrice, whom I have the misfortune to call my wife, owes money to every man that would trust her, and has married me to pay her debts."

"I hope not, Sir," said Henry, with astonishment and dismay.

"It is too true that I am in debt, Henry," said my mother.

"Yes," said Mr. Winterdale; "its truth is not to be doubted. But she shall not have the pleasure of spending all my fortune. If it must go, I will bestow a part of it on those who deserve it. Some good shall come out of evil. Henry, I double your allowance, from

this day. I may do more; but I do not know yet what I can do."

Henry gratefully thanked his father, and said he should not take advantage of a moment when he was heated by unexpected demands; but would wait till he had time to reflect, before he accepted his offer.

"I will have no hesitation," said Mr. Winterdale. "Take me, while I am in the humour: and now ring the bell."

Mendall came into the room.

"Mendall," said his master, "I have always been sensible of your merit.—You cannot say that I have not. But I have not rewarded it properly. I shall increase your salary twenty pounds a year; and tell Stable she shall have ten, and Ralph he shall have five, more than they have."

Mendall was dumb, with astonishment.

"You may well stare," continued Mr. Winterdale. "I have hitherto known only the pleasure of saving money: I begin to think there is a pleasure in spending it: a lesson I have been taught by your lady, here. Her Ladyship has been spending my money, before it was her's; and I am resolved to take a little of it out of her clutches."

"I am very much obliged to you, Sir, for your bounty," said Mendall; "though I am sorry for the occasion. I did hear my lady owed some money, before I left town."

"Would to God I had heard it before I left town," said Mr. Winterdale."— "Why did not you tell me of it, Mendall?"

"I did not know it till after the wedding, Sir," replied Mendall; "and then

I thought you would hear of it too soon, without me."

"Then had you known of it before, Mendall," said my mother, I am afraid I should have had but a small chance of becoming your mistress."

"I am afraid your Ladyship would," said Mendall.

"Your master is more indebted to your honesty than I am to your good will," said my mother.

"I should be very sorry to offend your Ladyship," said Mendall; but I hope your Ladyship cannot be offended, when you consider that honesty is all a servant has to trust to, and that he owes it first to his master."

"Ah! Mendall!" said Mr. Winterdale, "if your Lady had been as upright as you, we might have been a happy family."

"But, Mendall," said my mother,

" if I had been as upright as you are, you would not have had your salary raised, you know; so, as your master has just said, good comes out of evil."

" The evil causes by which good is produced are not the less wicked on account of their unforeseen effects," said Mr. Winterdale; and in this case, as in most others, they could not have produced such effects, without another cause. Had my son and my servants been undeserving, your being so would not have operated in their favour."

Mendall then left the room, and his master followed; no doubt, to deposit his sorrows and vexations in the bosom of his trusty squire.

Thus, my dear Harriet, has my mother swam and paddled through this *Sea of troubles.* I should have sunk into it, and been drowned.

I will not make use of Mr. Winterdale's vulgar term—impudence; but, certainly, my mother has a wonderful equanimity of temper! In a right cause, it would be a virtue; in this, I am afraid it approaches nearer Mr. Winterdale's ideas of it than I could wish. I, sometimes, feel a little ashamed of being her daughter. If that is a wrong expression, chide and forgive

Your

CHARLOTTE MONTGOMERY.

LETTER XXXIII.

TO MISS CASTLEMAIN.

Winterdale, July 18, 1812.

MY DEAR HARRIET,

SINCE I wrote last Mr. Winterdale has had several attacks upon his purse and his patience. Sometimes he grinds his teeth, and is silent; at others he flies out, as before. Every sentiment of love and esteem is fled; but, I suppose, my mother never built her prospects of happiness upon these. Harriet, what can be called happiness without them?

The greatest enjoyment this world affords appears to me the love of the man with whom I am to spend my life! to whom I am indissolubly bound! at

least, the bond is so strong, that nothing but the greatest violence can dissolve it. Shall I sit down to breakfast, to dinner, to supper, every day, with a man who may hate, or despise me, or to whom I may be indifferent! Shall this man have a right to enter my apartment any hour of the day; and shall I not have the power even to exclude him at night! Avert it, heaven! for I could not exist under it.

Next to this enjoyment, are the love and respect of those around one; one's family, one's friends, one's neighbours, one's servants. Great blessings! though inferior to the first.

My mother has forfeited all. How she can look her husband in the face is, to me, amazing. Filial love and duty scarcely keep me within the bounds I ought to observe towards my mother. What must Henry, the noble Henry,

who, in all the fire of youth, has walked in the narrow path prescribed for him by his father, without verging towards the right or the left, without making one crooked step, what must he think of her?

What must Mendall think? who, placed between a suspicious tyrant on one hand; and people whose dependent situation leads them to be petty invaders of his rights, on the other; has kept each in his place, and given satisfaction to all. What must the other servants think? who have never betrayed their master; whether from their own integrity, or that of their superintendant.

And, lastly, what must the Thacker's think? How must they triumph in the misfortune of their adversary! The pecuniary losses of the avaricious Mr. Winterdale, and the forced submission

of the absolute Mr. Winterdale, will be the highest gratification to them.

On one of the occasions in which Mr. Winterdale indulged himself in invective, he concluded by addressing himself to his son.

"Henry," said he, "you see what vipers women are. Let my fate be a warning to you. Trust none of them. I would sooner leave my estate to build hospitals than marry the best. I should not wonder if even Charlotte, here, innocent as she looks, were in debt!"

"Indeed Sir," said I, "with shame and sorrow I confess it; I am still more in debt than my mother."

Both father and son started; and their involuntary motion seemed to be to run away from the vipers. Mr. Winterdale was the first to recover the use of his speech.

"I could not have believed it," ex-

claimed he, though I said it! "An unmarried woman! A minor! Pray, my dear, how could you contrive to get into debt? You can owe for nothing but a few feathers and frills; and, considering the handsome allowance your guardians have made you, I do not very well see how that could happen."

"Sir," said I, "I have contracted debts in a manner, and to an extent, of which you have no conception. I stand engaged for sums expended in our house and amusements. We lived beyond our income; our creditors could no longer be pacified; and I borrowed money on very disadvantageous terms, to pay them.

"My dear," said Mr. Winterdale, "you judge very wisely, that I could have no conception of this; but you should not have owned it, till you had found out some fool to marry you."

"I agreed with my mother," replied I, "in living in a style we could not support, and ought never to have fallen into; but I differed from her in opinion, with regard to confessing its consequences before marriage."

"Yes," said my mother, "I must do Miss Montgomery the justice to own that she wanted me to arrange all my faults and misdemeanors in proper order, and place them before you; and then ask if you would do me the favour to marry me, with my sins upon my head. Nay, I was once afraid she would have taken that trouble upon herself."

"That step alone would have washed out all her transgressions," said Mr. Winterdale. "So then, my pretty one," continued he, addressing himself to me, "you had occasion for the name of Mereval too?"

"No, Sir," replied I, "a moment's reflection will convince you that I am safe till I come of age."

"But if you should lose your cause, no name, except that of a husband, can keep you out of a gaol, after you are of age."

"I thank you, Sir, for your assurances that I shall not lose my cause; but, whether I do, or not, no man shall ever become responsible for my debts, without first knowing what they are."

"Then I fancy that pretty white hand of your's will lead apes in the other world," said Mr. Winterdale.

I felt hurt at his sarcasms; hurt, almost to tears; but I restrained them, and made no reply. What emotions were depicted in my face, I know not; but I turned my eyes on Henry, and observed in his, pity, mingled with horror.

Eleanor and I then retired to our drawing-room, and I sent to request the favour of Henry's company, for a few moments. I held out my hand to him, as he entered, and, turning my face another way, I burst into tears. He took my hand, and kissed it.

"Henry," said I, "dare you trust yourself with vipers?"

"My dear Charlotte," said he; "though I cannot help blaming your conduct, I pity your distress."

"You cannot blame me more than I do myself," said I. "There needed not Mr. Winterdale's sarcastic reflections to inform me I had done wrong. To him I will offer no reply. Let him judge me as he may think I deserve. To you I will only say that, the mischief done, it appeared incumbent on me to repair it; by paying debts which, though contracted in my mother's

name, were for our mutual service; and with money to which I had then an undoubted right, and which the law would shortly place at my disposal."

"You did not see," said Henry, that such reasoning might have led to your utter ruin."

"I did not," replied I; "nor could it have involved me in ruin, if my father's estate had remained undisputed."

"Not what you had already done," said Henry; but the track you were in pointed directly to it."

"I am aware of that," said I; "and I look upon the claims of Sir James Montgomery as the means, in the hands of providence, to snatch me from such a desperate course. My own resolution *might* have saved me, for I did not take such measures without great reluctance; but I dare not

say that it *would*. There are two circumstances which, unhappily for me, aggravate a conduct that, without them, would admit of no defence. The first is, that my mother and myself being both culpable, each fault casts a dark shade on the other, and doubles the disgrace of both: after her errors have been weighed, mine are thrown into the scale, and down we go together. The other is the unworthy trick that has been practised upon Mr. Winterdale. In this, I solemnly assure you, and Eleanor knows I speak the truth, that I had no share."

"I should be ashamed," said Eleanor, "that any declaration of mine could be thought necessary to confirm whatever you said."

"And I should despise myself," said Henry, "if I did not give implicit

belief to whatever either of you said."

"I not only had no share in the deceit that has been practised upon Mr. Winterdale," said I; "but I endeavoured to prevent it, by intreaties, arguments, and tears. I even hesitated, as my mother has hinted, whether I should not inform him or you of her circumstances; but, upon reflection, I concluded that I had no right to betray my mother. There were times, however, in which I hoped Mr. Winterdale's circumspection might preserve him from the pit that was dug under his feet; and, at one of those times a hasty expression escaped me to that effect, which you combated, without knowing the just reason I had for it."

"I remember it," said Henry,—

"you wished *your mother might be found out;* and I imagined you alluded only to her name. I have not seen the property of my father, which has been accumulated by self-denial and perseverance, made subservient to the purposes of extravagance in another, without great pain; and the greater, because it became so by his vow to love and cherish that other: but, my dear Charlotte, I am happy to find you are not implicated in it. The dreadful idea that you were privy to the plot has sometimes crossed my mind, though I always strove to banish it instantly, as unworthy both of you and myself."

"I am too near my mother to escape suspicion," said I. "Even Eleanor, as her niece, and one of her family, perhaps may not have escaped it wholly;

but I told you, at the same memorable time, I referred to before, that whatever discoveries might be made to the prejudice of the Montgomeries, none could ever be made to the disadvantage of Miss Mowbray. She was made acquainted with my mother's intention of marrying Mr. Winterdale when I was, and thought of it as I did; but she made fewer romonstrances; as believing she had less right to make them. She has no fault, but that of having lived with us."

"If that were the case," said Eleanor, with a charming smile, "I must have another—I could not repent of my fault."

I gave her a look of love and gratitude; then, turning to Henry, I proceeded.

"As to our circumstances, my cousin

was totally ignorant of them, till she came to reside with us. We then concealed nothing from her; and our misfortunes, though the consequence of imprudence, as what are termed misfortunes generally are, did not induce her to abandon us to our fate. I declare that, next to heaven, she has been my support under reflections which would otherwise have been insupportable."

Henry fixed his eyes on Eleanor while I was speaking, and, when I had ended, exclaimed, "Ah! I could not be mistaken!

"You may be assured," said I, "that this formidable plot had only one woman in it; and, you know, Scrub says there is no plot without one."

"There is only one I do not acquit from the bottom of my soul," said Henry. "Every person must con-

demn her conduct; and it truly grieves me that I cannot respect the wife of my father, and the parent and relation of my beloved and ingenuous friends. It will not, however, as she, herself observed, be wholly unattended with good consequences. Her profusion has already corrected my father's extreme frugality, and I hope his sparing hand will restrain her thoughtless extravagance."

"Dear Henry," said I, "so may it prove! and may I never have any more faults to acknowledge to you, at the hazard of losing my portion of your esteem! This has lain heavy at my heart, and does still; so heavy, that I shall be very careful to avoid self reproach in future."

Farewell, my dear Harriet. The road before me becomes smoother, by

every confession of my past errors. If I marry, and if Montgomery be the man, I have only to fear his father, as the judge of

Your

CHARLOTTE MONTGOMERY.

LETTER XXXIV.

TO MISS CASTLEMAIN.

Winterdale, July 25, 1812.

MY DEAR HARRIET,

I SEEM to have recovered the good opinion of Mr. Winterdale. Whether his own reflections, or the representations of his son, or the allurements of my father's estate, have been my advocates, I know not; but certain it is, that he treats me with the same kindness as before.

"Charlotte," said he to me, one day, "you have been a naughty girl; and many young men would be afraid to marry you after such imprudence; but I blame your mother more than you.

She has been your model and your preceptress; and a young girl, like you, could not easily withstand both precept and example, when they pointed to pleasure. However, I hope she will now be a warning to you; and, if you reflect properly, perhaps, a worthy respectable man may venture upon you yet."

"I am fully sensible of my fault," said I, "and fully determined against every thing of the same kind for the future; but I would have no man venture upon me, till time have proved my sincerity."

"Very right," returned Mr. Winterdale. "You are young enough to wait; and no prudent man could take you at present. If you gain your cause, which I think is not to be doubted, your husband must be content to sacrifice one year of your income to

the payment of your debts; and you must expiate a little of your fault by requiring no pin money; and then matters will be restored to their proper level. If, by any strange perversion of right, you loose your cause, no man could marry you at all, unless he were out of his senses; or were the cheated credulous fool that I have been."

"My voluntary confession to you, Sir," said I, "is some security against the latter: the former is out of my power."

"What! to bewitch a man out of his senses!" exclaimed Mr. Winterdale. "What are sparkling eyes, and glowing cheeks, and enchanting smiles given you for, but to drive mankind out of their senses? At least, what other use do you make of them? Add to these, pretended tenderness and as-

siduity, in case of a broken leg, and the poor man is irretrievably lost."

"I sincerely hope that no accident of that kind will again subject you to female influence, Sir," said I.

"O, no;" you may depend upon that," said Mr. Winterdale. "Now I am tied by the leg, I should not be overloaded with female tenderness, if I were to break both. But now we are upon the subject of your marriage, Charlotte, I must give you a caution. Your candour in owning your fault, makes some atonement for it; and I should not like to see you throw yourself away. I suspect that Montgomery. I think he comes here dangling after you. His family I have no objection to; it is your own, and we will let it pass; but I will answer for it he is in debt, as sure as his name is Montgomery; and much more reason-

able that a subaltern officer should be, than a sober widow, or a modest young lady. And that he is a libertine is equally certain. Idleness and bad company make them all such. Whatever you do, never marry a soldier."

"I have no inclination to marry a soldier, I assure you, Sir," said I. "They have no medium between too much leisure, and too much fatigue. The one is dangerous to the morals; the other to the constitution. Besides, I should not choose to have my husband of a profession that must necessarily separate me from him."

"You judge very rightly, Charlotte," said Mr. Winterdale. "What must the feelings of a woman be, who could be happy while her husband was messing with a parcel of young rakes at home, or committing murder abroad? Nay, perhaps being mur-

dered! I do not like soldiers myself; and if I were master of my own house, I would turn Montgomery out of it, the next time he makes his appearance. I believe he wants your fortune: but mind what I say—Wait. You may yet find some deserving man that will have you."

I thanked Mr. Winterdale for his advice, and was proceeding to tell him that it was my intention to wait, when a servant announced Mrs. Thacker and Mr. Sharp. Mr. Winterdale, without staying to receive any of their compliments, made his escape at one door, as they entered at the other.

Ever since Mr. Sharp has been acquainted with my Chancery suit, he shuns me as if it were contagious. He now seated himself by Eleanor, and began a conversation, in which he left her little to say. Mrs. Thacker

spared my tongue at the expence of my ears, till my mother joined us; when I was left at liberty to make my own observations.

"My dear Lady Winterdale," said that lady, "you can't conceive how monstrous glad I am that you have jockeyed your gentleman. We have heard all how and about it; for, in such a little petty *willage* as this here, you know nothing can't be kept a secret, for servants. Every thing runs like wild fire; and every body knows that you have run old Hunco Munco twenty thousand pound in debt, before you married him."

"Your news runs more like a snow-ball, which gathers as it goes," said my mother. "I do owe some trifles, but altogether do not amount to half that sum: and you will oblige me very much, if when you have occasion to

speak to me of Mr. Winterdale, you do not call him old Hunco Munco."

"O, certainly, if your Ladyship does not like it, I won't," replied Mrs. Thacker. "I beg your pardon. I generally say what comes topmost; and I'm sure I thought, after tricking him so cleverly, your Ladyship would not care a farthing what anybody called him."

You are quite mistaken," said my mother. "I always treat Mr. Winterdale with the respect due to my husband, and it is my wish that nobody should forget he is a gentleman."

"Well, I won't *forgit* it *agin*," said Mrs. Thacker. "Your Ladyship is a lady of *wery* refined notions of *purpriety* and *dickorum* and all that: but give me a *voman* of spirit; and your Ladyship does not want for spirit, neither. I'm *purdigiously* glad you've made the

shiners fly. As my Mr. Thacker observes in the pulpit, *Riches makes to themselves wings, and fly away;* but Mr. Winterdale had clapped them up so close in his chest, that he thought they had not room to make their wings; nor never a hole to get out at, if they was ready made; but your Ladyship has been too many for him. The men may call themselves the Lords of the creation, and make a fuss about their *progaties*; but we poor, weak females seldom knock under. I know I'd be a match for my gentleman, if he was Archbishop of Canterbury."

I now listened on the other side, and heard Mr. Sharp say, in a low voice, to Eleanor. "One would think my aunt, was my own aunt, instead of my aunt-in-law, by her *sharpness*. I should think *ivery* woman must

be a match for her husband; or they could *niver* have made a match of it. Should not you, Miss Mowbray?" After having laughed heartily at his own conceit, and provoked Eleanor to join him, he seemed to resume his former subject. "Come, now, my dear Miss Mowbray," said he, "now do tell me if you think it was pretty behaviour."

"I am no judge of it," replied Eleanor.

"But I know you are a judge of it," said Mr. Sharp. "You are a judge of *ivery think* in the world. Now, would you have done so?"

"I cannot say what I *would* have done," answered Eleanor: "it is enough for me to say what I *have* done."

"Why I would lay any money,"

said Mr. Sharp, "that you owe nobody *nothink* at all."

"You would win any money, if you did," said Eleanor; "but I have never been under the temptation Lady Winterdale has. I have lived with prudent careful people, and always had more money than I wished to spend."

"Well, and so have I," rejoined Mr. Sharp. "It's very odd we two should be so much *aliky*. If I was to go to try, to spend my income, I could not do it, for the life and soul of me. Not that I am over and above saving neither; for I always please my fancy, and *niver* grudge myself any think I've a mind of. Last year I was at Brighton; and I subscribed to the rooms, and the master of the *ceremony*, and the *libery*, and *ivery think*; and I gave a guinea for a

few sea weeds, and two guineas for a pretty little dog."

"You have no inclination for horses, carriages, and gaming," said Eleanor; "or you might soon find the way to want money."

"O, dear, no," replied Mr. Sharp. "I do not so much as keep a horse for my own riding. I think they are very dangerous things. I have wondered many a time and often how any man could *iver* first get upon the back of *sich* a great, big, wilful, animal, and pull him by the mouth. For my part, I think one's safest afoot. If I go a little way, I always walk; and if I have far to go, I take my carriage; but as to being fond of carriages, and *brooshes*, and mail-coach *thingumties*, and four-in-hands, and them things, why it is quite out of my way. And as

to gaming, why I like a game at cards, now and then, because it brings good company together; but I am none of the deepest: I only play for a little *amoosment*."

"You do not spend money in company and a large establishment," said Eleanor.

"I have a very good house at home," said Mr. Sharp, "and *ivery think* very comfortable; and I've very nice dinners, and live very well; and I have a housekeeper, and a girl under her, and a coachman, and a footman, and all that: and I have left the housekeeper at home now, to take care of things; and the coachman to mind his horses, and the garden; and I gave the girl leave to go and see her friends; but I pay her her wages; so you see, I am

not *necessiated* to stay at my uncle Thacker's."

"Perhaps you stay for the sake of society; as you have only servants in your own house," said Eleanor.

"Ah! Miss Mowbray!" replied Mr. Sharp, "you have hit the right nail on the head! But" continued he, lowering his voice still more, "it is not for the sake of the society of my uncle and aunt, though I am a very dutiful and affectionate *nevvy;* but I have *somethink* to *commoonicate* to you, when we have an opportunity, that will surprize you."

Mrs. Thacker's voice now wholly overpowered that of Mr. Sharp, and I was obliged to listen on her side. "*Vell, vell,*" said the lady, "you are the best judge of your own affairs; but, I know, I should never be sorry for it. I was

not bred and born in London for nothing. I know all the great folks run into debt, and most of them never think about paying. I know another thing too; and that is, they pay through the nose, when they do pay. My father was in business himself, and I have heard him say he could not afford to sell his *marchandice* so cheap to a Lord as to his next door neighbour. Let the tradesfolks trust; they lay it on. I'm sure I think your ladyship has behaved *wery* honourable to make Mr. Winterdale pay them at last; and no harm done to him, neither. What's gold good for, locked in a chest? Let it *circlate*, I say."

"Indeed," said my mother, "I had no other alternative. I could not live without food and clothes; and my servants and horses must eat. I only

had a small party now and then; nothing to what many women of fashion have; and I take heaven to witness I was very sorry, when I found I could not pay the people! But what could I do? I could not make money! so I thought when Mr. Winterdale and I felt a mutual regard, it was a good opportunity to satisfy them, without doing any real injury to him. He does not enjoy less; he has only less to reckon."

"Your Ladyship forgets," said I, "that reckoning his money was Mr. Winterdale's only enjoyment."

"Be quiet, Charlotte," said my mother. "I do not like you to argue against me. I had rather have the 'Squire and the Parson, together, for my opponents than you alone. Pardon me, Mrs. Thacker, I mean no reflection upon your husband."

"I pardon you with all my heart." said Mrs. Thacker. "Pray reflect upon him as much as you please. I no more mind having the parson against me, than this pinch of snuff; and I should mind the 'Squire as little; only you insist upon my treating him with respect."

"Miss Montgomery is a very tenacious disputant," said my mother. "If one hunts her out of one argument, she lays hold of another. For my part, I hate argument. I would only just claim the privilege of doing whatever I liked, and leave all disputable points to the lovers of controversy. One must talk a little in defence of one's actions, when people are so unconscionable as not to be pleased with them; but as for opinions, I give them to the world's discretion; for I would not say a single word to prevail upon the world to

adopt them.—But, Charlotte, your present argument is not unanswerable; for, if I have robbed Mr. Winterdale of a part of his former enjoyment, I have opened a new source for him; and I do not despair of increasing it, in time. He has lately acquired a knowledge of the pleasure of bestowing money."

"If you have done that," said Mrs. Thacker, "you deserve to be *catechised* for a saint; for no human *bein* could work such a *merricle*. But is it *possable* that you are so amazingly clever as to *larn* Mr. Winterdale to part with his money? For God's sake, tell me your secret, that I may practice it a little upon Mr. Thacker."

"Pardon me," replied my mother. "You might be canonized too; and it were unreasonable that all wives should become saints."

"Ah!" said Mr. Sharp; "no fear

of that. My aunt's days of saintship are over. For my part, I think no lady can be a saint after she is married. One may adore pretty young ladies, like Miss Mowbray, and bow the knee before them."

"Mr. Sharp," said I, "you are unusually brilliant to-day; but I am not so fortunate as to come in for a share of your fine speeches. Is Saint Charlotte struck out of your calender?"

"O, dear, no; to be sure not," answered Mr. Sharp; "though I can't say I *iver* heard of *sich* a saint, neither."

"Perhaps," said I, "you never heard of a saint being drawn into a law-suit, for the preservation of her estate."

"That would be a new kind of martyrdom," said Eleanor.

"A very terrible one, indeed," said

Mr. Sharp. "I'm sure I would not become a saint at such an expence, for all the world."

"If I must purchase the crown of martyrdom," said I, "it should rather be by patiently enduring the tortures of the law, than by submitting to any of the old fashioned recipes for cooking saints; such as cutting into steaks or cutlets, or broiling whole on a grid-iron."

"O, shocking!" exclaimed Mr. Sharp, "I wonder how a *delicot*, sensible young lady could come to go to think of *sich* a thing!"

"You are a little shocking, indeed, Charlotte," said my mother.

"I beg your Ladyship's pardon, as Mrs. Thacker did just now; for, like her, I spoke what came *topmost*."

"But," said Mrs. Thacker, "it is well my gentleman is not here; for we

have run away from our *subjick*. Now, my dear Lady Winterdale, do tell me, of all the contrivances upon earth, what could *possably* make Mr. Winterdale give away his money.

"I should like to know that too," said Mr. Sharp; "for I should think it one of the very *unlikeliest*, and *improbablest* things that *iver* I knew in all my life. Now, my lady, let me beg of you now, to have the goodness, to be so obliging as to tell us."

"There is nothing more simple," replied my mother. "Mr. Winterdale found his money must go, whether he would or not; and he chose that some of it should go under his own direction."

"Is that all?" demanded Mr. Sharp. "It was easy to be generous, when it cost him *nothink*."

"And a very good way too," said

Mrs. Thacker; "but I spend so much, myself, that I don't leave Mr. Thacker a great deal, to shew his generosity."

"It seems you have only to marry," said Eleanor to Mr. Sharp, "to be able to get rid of your money."

"I hope *my* lady will not be too extravagant," returned Mr. Sharp; "but I do think I shall venture, if I can find *iver* a *bootiful*, sensible, amiable, young lady that will have me."

"If I was a tall, genteel gentleman, with a good house, and a handsome carriage, and fourscore thousand pounds in my pocket, I should never be afraid of that," said Mrs. Thacker." I would strike up to the best of them. Why, they are but flesh and blood, as well as yourself."

"O, dear, aunt," said Mr. Sharp, "I vow you make me blush. To be sure, I have a good house, and a handsome

carriage, and *sich like*, and, I must needs say, I'm tall enough; but as for being genteel, I'm sure I think *nothink* at all about that; though it is very kind of you to encourage me, and let me have your good word."

"How unlucky is it that Mrs. Thacker is married; If she had not been the wife of the uncle, you might have wooed her to accept the nephew," said I.

"You are joking now," said Mr. Sharp; "I love my aunt, as my aunt; but I should like one a little younger for my wife."

"Hold you there!" cried Mrs. Thacker. "If I was a *widder*, I might *purtend* to one as young as yourself, without any *purdigious vanity*, or *impurprioty*. You fine gentlemen think a lady is nothing but lumber, when she is turned of thirty." [Nota bene, Mrs.

Thacker meant to say forty.] "But I forgive you. Go on, and prosper."

Mrs. Thacker finished the conversation by inviting us to dinner, tea, and supper, for next Thursday se'nnight. She told us, with an air of importance, that her entertainment would be quite in style, and begged we would prevail upon Mr. Henry Winterdale to accompany us; adding, as a great secret, that she should engage music, for the young folks to dance.

Mr. Sharp then claimed the honour of dancing with his old partner, with as much confidence as if the dancing with her once had given him a title to her ever after: an honour she accorded with a sigh.

My dear Harriet, if you are weary of this idle prattle, say so, and I have done. I cannot make Mr. Sharp a man of sense, or Mrs. Thacker a well-

informed woman; and I have no variety; except an accidental tête-à-tête I had with Montgomery, which would be still less interesting to a third person. I shall therefore only tell you that he continues to worship

Your

CHARLOTTE MONTGOMERY.

LETTER XXXV.

TO MISS CASTLEMAIN.

Winterdale, Aug. 1, 1812.

MY DEAR HARRIET,

AFTER certain hints and innuendoes in my last, you will not be surprised at my venturing to congratulate my cousin, on her conquest of Mr. Sharp. We had each of us a smile on her countenance, when we were joined by Henry. Whether our subject had rendered our smiles particularly interesting, I know not; but they excited his curiosity, and he inquired their cause. Eleanor was silent.

"If you will not answer Henry, I will," said I.

Still silent.

"Then you must know," continued

I, "my cousin and I are so equally charming, that, like Bessy Bell and Mary Gray, a certain gentle shepherd found himself obliged to fall in love with both of us. Do you doubt it? demanded I.

"By no means," replied Henry, gravely, and with some alarm; thinking, I believe, that I alluded to himself.

"Then I proceed," said I. "You know, when our merits were exactly even, a hair would turn the scale. What, then must my vexatious law-suit do? I am sorry to confess that *I have been weighed in the balance, and been found* not *wanting;* but overloaded; while the unencumbered Eleanor has gained the prize."

"What prize? may I ask?" said Henry, who seemed relieved from one alarm only to experience another.

"No less," replied I, "than the tall and slender, gentle, and gentlemanlike, Mr. Sharp. But I should have made you wait a month for a secret so precious."

"You could not have been so malicious," said Henry. "It is what I might have expected. Neither gentle or ungentle could be safe from the attractions of Miss Mowbray."

"Indeed," said Eleanor, "it is nothing but a whim of Charlotte's. She fancies Mr. Sharp has not paid her so much attention, since he was informed of her law-suit; and consequently he has paid me more."

"Don't provoke me," said I. "Did not he say he thought he should venture to marry, if a beautiful, sensible, amiable, affable, agreeable, adorable young lady would have him?

"Surely it does not follow that he meant me," said Eleanor.

"Why no," said Henry; "If that be all, he might as well mean Charlotte."

"I thank you," said I; "but I tell you my law-suit puts me entirely out of the question. He would as soon *meet a bear i'th' mouth.*"

"But, said Eleanor, "there may be other young women who answer the description. It could not necessarily be either of us."

"Not many who deserve it so well, I am afraid," said Henry.

"Did not he talk of adoring you, and bowing the knee to you?" demanded I.

"Mere compliment — words of course,"—replied Eleanor.

"I think our Eleanor's conquest is

doubtful," said Henry, " if Mr. Sharp addressed her in such words as these—the language of common rant; not real love!"

" Still incredulous," said I, " what pains it costs me to convince Eleanor she is beloved; or you that she is likely to be so! Did not he, said I to Eleanor, display his riches and generosity to tempt you? Did not he say he had given two guineas for a puppy, and one for a bundle of weeds; thereby insinuating that his wife should be entitled to throw away money also? Did not he congratulate himself that you were both *alike?* and did not he say he had *somethink to commoonicate* that would surprise you? you are determined to be surprised, I think; for you will not suspect till you have a downright declaration."

Eleanor and Henry could not help

laughing: but the gentleman resumed his gravity in a moment.—"I beg your pardon," said he, "I have no right to laugh at Mr. Sharp. It is possible you may not disapprove his pretensions."

"I know not what his pretensions are," said Eleanor; "but, if they are of the kind you mean, surely I cannot be so very like Mr. Sharp as to countenance them! Surely no woman of common sense could feel any thing for him but pity!"

"Pity, in a susceptible bosom, is sister to love," said Henry.

"Pity for sufferings of which we believe ourselves the cause may," rejoined Eleanor; "but certainly not the pity we bestow upon weakness: that is more nearly allied to contempt."

"To be serious," said I, "you ought rather to beg Eleanor's pardon for dar-

ing to imagine she could entertain a thought of such a — I was going to call him by some unhandsome name— but he betrays such a poverty of understanding, that it would be giving the contempt to inanity which is due only to folly. I am so impressed with this idea, that, when I cannot help laughing at his *syllyisms*, I feel something of what I should feel, if I were laughing at bodily deformity."

"I was to blame," said Henry. "Had I considered for a moment, I could not have supposed a treasure no man can deserve could fall to the lot of Mr. Sharp. The pain I felt at the idea did not allow me to examine its probability."

Eleanor cast down her eyes; and the pure and eloquent blood which spoke in her cheeks was her only reply.

"Mrs. Thacker has commissioned us to make a request to you," said I, "which it would give us infinite pleasure to obtain."

"It would be very painful to me to refuse it, then," said Henry.

"She is going to have a party, and has invited us, of course; but she has also desired us to try our power over you. She wishes you would accompany us."

"It would oblige us very much," said Eleanor; "if you think you could do it with propriety."

"Such a request, and so made," answered Henry, "would overset all my notions of propriety, if they opposed it. Fortunately they do not: for though I would not have introduced any part of Mr. Thacker's family here, knowing how odious he is to my father, I am not sorry for an opportunity to shew Mrs.

Thacker and Mr. Sharp that I do not enter wholly into my father's resentments."

"You may possibly draw some part of them upon yourself," said I, "by your compliance with our wishes; and we will not take advantage of your good-nature, to lay you under Mr. Winterdale's displeasure."

"My dear Charlotte," said Henry, "every man must have some guide for his actions; and, as all are liable to err, he may as well err by the deficiency of his own judgment as that of another. If every action of my life were directed by my father, I could not hope to be always right; therefore I ought to be the responsible person for what is wrong. As far as my judgment goes, I will avoid every thing that can reasonably offend my father, and I have hitherto been so happy as to have succeeded;

but the same principle would teach me to bear his displeasure; if I incurred it, as I thought, without a cause."

"We submit to your decision," said I, "Great was our heroism to argue against our wishes; for, be it known to you, Henry, as a great secret, and all great secrets ought to be made known to the first person we meet, that we are to have a ball! Did you ever hear of such a prodigy at Winterdale?"

"Never," replied Henry. "I suppose Mrs. Thacker gives it in honour of Lady Winterdale and my sisters."

"And much honour I expect it will reflect upon herself," said I. "She gives dinner, tea, and supper. These country ladies think they can never do enough for us."

"There is nothing so fatiguing as these all-day visits," said Eleanor. "Eating, drinking, and talking, for so

many hours together, wear one's spirits down to a shadow. I should dread Mrs. Thacker's hospitality of all things, if there were not a ball at the end of it."

"Dear, delightful, dancing," cried I, "how I worship thee! Thou canst make even plumb pudding and roast beef tolerable!"

"I pity Mrs. Thacker most," said Henry, "who will not dance, and who will have only vanity to support her under the excessive fatigue of entertaining her company. In London you only provide the means, and leave the company to entertain themselves: here the lady of the house has a very laborious part to perform. It is her's to welcome every body, talk to every body, carve for every body, and keep an eye over every body's wants and comforts."

"Then," said I, "Mrs. Thacker has to be thankful for her lungs of brass,

ready eloquence, and personal strength; qualities which I did not envy her for before. But Mr. Sharp will assist her in conversation: he will play treble to her base."

"Instead of saving each other's exertions, they rather add to them," said Eleanor; "for both talk at the same time, and each is obliged to raise the voice, in order to be heard."

"I have often wondered Mr. Sharp's tongue did not tire," said I; "for it is not supplied from so powerful a source as Mrs. Thacker's."

"The springs upon which it is hung are so elastic, that it is enabled to run easily, and does not call upon the lungs for any great exertion," said Henry. "I hope," continued he, addressing himself to Eleanor, "it has not been beforehand with me, in requesting the pleasure of dancing with you."

"I am very sorry," replied Eleanor (and most sincere was her sorrow) "but I am already engaged to dance with Mr. Sharp."

Henry made no answer. A dead silence ensued for a few moments, which I broke, by saying, "Henry, why do not you ask me? I will take you at the rebound."

"I durst not offer you a rejected man," said he: "besides, upon second thoughts, I do not know that I shall dance."

Henry, soon after, left us; and left poor Eleanor to compare what she had accepted with what she had missed.

By the bye, my dear Harriet, the laws of dancing are very severe upon us females. Like other laws, they were made, I suppose, by lordly man; and, therefore, made much in his favour. He enters a ball room; he looks round him, perhaps with a saucy air; he con-

templates a number of young women, who are placed in ranks before him, dressed in their gayest apparel, and their best looks; and he singles out the object of his choice. It is true the poor victim has a veto. She can say, no; but then she forfeits the privilege of saying yes, as long as the ball shall last. There needs only a disagreeable man; imagine him like Dr. Johnson, if you will, with a brown coat, a huge wig, and a snuffy nose; or like Mr. Sharp, with a person like a walking stick, and a tongue like the moment hand of a clock, always moving, though not to so good a purpose; to spoil an evening's amusement; leaving a poor girl the blessed alternative of spoiling it by dancing with a frightful or a despicable object; or by sitting still. If ever I am commissioned to regulate matters here below, I will alter this.

My next will contain an account of

the Elephant's Ball; but we have something to get through before we reach it. Mr. Winterdale is to be made acquainted with our purpose, and, after all, our dancing shoes may have to wade through the mire; for no other conveyance have we, and none can we have, unless some kind fairy should send us a car, drawn by doves or peacocks. As to a post-chaise, it would be equally absurd to send six miles for one, in order to carry us little more than a quarter of a mile; and for Lady Winterdale and her daughter to be seen to step out of it, if we did.

After wishing myself an agreeable partner, if with a smart cockade, so much the better, I conclude this epistle, by assuring you of the unalterable affection of

Your

CHARLOTTE MONTGOMERY.

LETTER XXXVI.

TO MISS CASTLEMAIN.

Winterdale, Aug. 8, 1812.

MY DEAR HARRIET,

THE evening preceding that of Mrs. Thacker's Ball, my mother informed Mr. Winterdale of it, and of her intention to go. He stormed as usual. She was silent, till he had exhausted his breath and his ideas, when she said, "Mr. Winterdale, it distresses me to put you in these passions; but I thought if we went without letting you know, you would not be the less angry."

"The way to prevent my anger," replied he, "would be not to think of going at all."

"That would be very unreasonable," said her Ladyship: "you had much better go with us."

"I go with you!" exclaimed Mr. Winterdale. "I would as soon make a party with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, to sup in the fiery furnace!"

"I dare say Mr. Thacker would think himself much honoured by your company, and all animosity might be forgotten."

"I visit that scoundrel, Thacker! I forget all animosity! What's in the wind now? how came such ideas to enter your Ladyship's head?"

"Mr. Winterdale," said my mother, "if your resolutions are not to be shaken, you cannot expect me to swerve from mine. You have no mind to go to Mr. Thacker's, it seems: do as you like. I have a mind to go; and I shall do as I like." "Henry," said she, "I hope

you have not already made laws, like those of the Medes and Persians, which alter not. Mrs. Thacker has requested the favour of your company: I hope you will not refuse to go."

"Miss Montgomery and Miss Mowbray have informed me of it," said Henry, "and I shall have the pleasure of attending your ladyship, and them."

The devil you will!" exclaimed Mr. Winterdale. "Are you to be master too?"

"Of one very inconsiderable being only, Sir—myself."

"I think you must pretend to be master of me, if you go in defiance of my positive commands; which you will do, if you go at all."

"Pardon me, Sir; in matters which regard only myself, I must take the liberty to judge for myself. Simply to go to the vicarage, independent of all

other considerations, is what common good neighbourhood would oblige me to do. As the vicar has unfortunately offended you, I have forborne all intercourse with his family; but, when they come here, when they invite me to renew the acquaintance, the obligation returns, and I cannot evade it, without seeming to encourage a vindictive spirit."

"Lady Winterdale, you have set up the standard of rebellion in my family, and my only son already ranges himself under it. My servants will come next, and tell me they cannot execute my orders, without encouraging some improper spirit. The spirit of darkness and disobedience rules you all. Am I to stand for nothing? Am I to be reduced to a cypher, in a house I once commanded, and which is still called mine? Is my wife to tell me she shall do as she likes, and my son that he shall judge for himself,

and am I to make my bow, and say, Just as you please?"

"Certainly," replied my mother. "You have existed all these years under a great mistake; and I hope you will one day thank me for setting you right. As to servants, they owe obedience to your lawful commands, because that is the express stipulation on which they are cloathed and fed; a covenant made by their own consent. They tranfer to you the direction of their hands and feet, and capacities, on condition of your giving certain garments to the men, and a certain stipend, and as much meat and drink as their appetites may require, to all. But, without this compact, do you believe you can have a right to command any of your fellow creatures, and, as such your equals? Do you believe, for instance, because you have given me your name, and made me mistress of

your family, that you have a right to command me? Or, that Henry, because he is of your own blood, and heir to your estate, owes you unconditional submission? Certainly not."

"Such logic as this," said Mr. Winterdale, with a deep sigh, "has ruined my authority as a husband and a father."

"Again! exclaimed his lady, "Shall I never prevail upon you to discard those naughty words! Instead of commands and authority, why will you not be content to be beloved and respected?"

"Good God!" cried Mr. Winterdale, "was there ever a woman that talked so rightly and acted so wrong! Henry, stop your ears against the voice of this syren, lest she persuade you, that to injure your father is to love him, and to ridicule is to respect him?"

"My opinions do not, in all points,

coincide with those of Lady Winterdale," said Henry, "and are not, in any point, influenced by them. This is the first instance in which I have ventured to dispute your will: others may occur; but nothing can eradicate from my bosom the love I have always borne you, and nothing soften the pain I feel in acting contrary to your wishes, but the conviction, that, as every man is responsible to the Almighty Power that made him for his own actions, they should be directed by his own judgment."

Mr. Winterdale shrunk into nothing at this reply of his son. His boasted fabric of authority melted away, and he seemed almost an object of compassion.

The day arrived. We dressed. Henry told us we were armed at all points for conquest. My mother stepped into the parlour where her husband was sitting. "My dear Mr. Winterdale,"

said she; "I come to bid you good bye; but I declare I have had such unforeseen difficulties to encounter, that I did not know whether I should ever be able to set out for the vicarage. Indeed, I don't know yet whether I shall ever get there. I cannot imagine how I could be so thoughtless. I have not a thing in the world that is not more than six months' old, and, consequently, not fit to be seen; and yet it never entered my head to send to town for something modern! I shall disgrace you shockingly!"

At these words, Mr. Winterdale could not avoid casting his eyes over the habiliments of his wife, which were tasteful and elegant, as well as costly; and who might, herself, have passed for a very handsome woman, just turned of thirty. He spoke not; but his looks expressed his approbation.

"And, would you believe it," continued she; "I never once discovered that I had not a carriage, till this moment, that I am going to set out, and find I am obliged to walk! One shower of rain would have spoiled all! Thank God it is fair; and the horrid cart road we have to cross, on the outside of the park, is dry; but it is dreadfully out of character, for the wife of Mr. Winterdale to walk! I declare I should die with shame and vexation, if any of the neighbouring families should be there, and hear Lady Winterdale's great coat and cork soled shoes called, when we came away."

"Lady Winterdale," said her husband, starting from his seat, is it possible that you can think of a carriage, when one of the express conditions of our marriage was that you should do,

as you were then doing, without one; and when I am paying large sums of money every day, for your former extravagance?"

"I really did not think of it," returned her Ladyship, "till I find I cannot do without one. If you reflect for a moment on the inconsistency of your wife; you, who are the sole representative of a long line of honourable and worshipful ancestors; of your wife, paddling through the mud to her visits, and following her lanthorn home again, you will be shocked, as well as myself."

Mr. Winterdale was going to reply, doubtless on the lanthorn side of the question, when her Ladyship put her hand on his mouth. "I will have no argument now," said she. "I shall not see you again for eight or ten hours, and I will have the satisfaction, all

that time, of thinking you are pleased with me." She then kissed her hand which had touched his lips, and tripped out of the room.

We marched under the shade of our parasols to the Vicarage; my mother leaning on Henry's arm; Eleanor and I following; and, to give the procession all the dignity in our power, Mendall and Robert, in their state habits, behind; leaving poor Mr. Winterdale no earthly companion, save Signior Carlo, Henry's spaniel. I could not help feeling a little remorse, though I do not pretend to so much as would excite a wish to remain at home with him.

We found a family at the Vicarage, of the name of Elrington, to whom Mrs. Thacker introduced us. They live within four miles of us, and are sufficiently agreeable to be very desir-

able neighbours ; but Mr. Winterdale's disposition has placed some barrier between us and every body. There is actually a suit now pending between him and Mr. Elrington, in consequence of an accidental trespass ; which is to be tried very soon. The whole family, consisting of father, mother, son, and two daughters, very politely lamented this circumstance, as depriving them of a share of the acquisition their neighbourhood had received in us.

Mr. and Mrs. Thacker treated Henry Winterdale with particular respect ; and if his father were composed of common materials, this visit might, indeed, be the means of burying former grievances in oblivion.

The rest of our company was a selection of the clerical, medical, and legal—if you will allow the word—gentry of the town and country ; some

sensible, some insensible—that is to say—stupid; some rather genteel; others making inordinate pretensions to gentility; fashion every where out of the question. But, really, Harriet, fashion is a factitious thing, and one may live very well without it. Now I have been six months out of its vortex, I will own to you that I like simple nature full as well.

Last, though not least, in the estimation of us dancing damsels, were the officers from the neighbouring town, Montgomery among the rest.

Mr. Sharp took upon himself the office of placing us at table, and took especial care to reserve for himself a chair next to that of Eleanor. He seated Mr. Elrington by my mother, Mr. Francis Elrington by me, Henry by Miss Elrington, and Montgomery by Miss Elizabeth. How

happy might a little alteration have made some of us, who now listened with more attention to the conversation which passed between our neighbours, than that addressed to ourselves. Mr. Sharp seemed to consider Eleanor as his own property, and by his perpetual talking to her, and frequent laughter, forbade the approach of any other person. Eleanor endeavoured to look at ease under his encroachments; but, unpractised in the art of dissimulation, she could not succeed. Henry managed still worse: for, in the midst of a fascinating speech from Miss Elrington, having his eyes fixed upon Eleanor, he started suddenly. and said, "I beg your pardon, Madam, I did not perfectly comprehend what you were saying." Montgomery acquitted himself better to her sister; but I could not help observing that he,

now and then, cast an intelligent, anxious look towards his namesake.

The table of Mrs. Thacker, sustained a load of every species of fish, flesh and fowl, that her money and industry could assemble; and of every genus and variety of tarts, and tartlets, custards, jellies and trifles. We were pressed to taste of every thing, and I do believe it took us full two hours, to travel through the different stages of our dinner. I began to imagine that if the gentlemen drank in proportion to their eating, we might get a night's rest before the ball; but they joined us between eight and nine o'clock, and at ten we were ushered into the parson's tythe barn, transformed into a ball room.

Mrs. Thacker had really shewn more taste in the decoration of this place than I imagined she possessed;

for, without endeavouring to hide its being a barn, she had rendered it neat, appropriate, and convenient. The floor was of stone, nicely swept, and covered with matting, except the space left for the dancers. The seats were benches, spread with dry moss; and all round the walls, above our heads, were hung real forks and rakes, which supported lights on their numerous teeth and prongs.

A small bay, at one end of the barn, elevated above the rest, was arched over with roots and moss, in the form of a grotto; a heavy oaken table, that had borne the tythe dinner of many a successive incumbent, was spread with negus, lemonade, macaroons, and various other refreshments; and, around the walls were arranged rustic chairs of roots, nailed together in fantastic forms. The lank-haired coachman,

and the chubby-faced plough boy, the one transformed into a venerable hermit, with a brown gown, a girdle and a rosary; and the other into a novice of the same order, attended to serve the company.

We crowded round Mrs. Thacker with expressions of admiration; and she received our praises with unrestrained delight.

"I told you," said she, "it would be quite the thing! O, I have been used to *wery* great doings in London. I once was thinking whether I could not *interduce* the river, and the *wessels*, and the *wherries*, and all them things; but, thinks I to myself, I live in the country, and a country lady I'll be content to be, and not *purtend* to be above my place. The barn's a barn, and so it shall remain. As to the *grotter*, I must own I think its a mighty

rural fancy; and its all my own *invention;* only I once saw one like it in a nobleman's park: and the *hurmit* is Mr. Thacker's doings. I had a mind of a pretty smart shepherd and shepherdess, with pink jackets and green shoulder knots, such as we had in *chany*, over the chimney piece of our parlour in London, instead of them horrid tammy gowns; but one must let the gentlemen have their way, sometimes, you know. Pray what does your Ladyship think of these *here* matters?"

"I think," replied Lady Winterdale, "they could not have been better. You would have found great difficulty in bringing the Thames and the shipping into this barn; and, if you could have succeeded, they would not have been so proper as its own beams and rafters,"

"Why, so I thought," returned Mrs.

Thacker; "and so I gave up my *projick.* I was only afraid them *wulgar* forks and rakes would look as if one did not know nothing of life."

"They do not remind one of the river and shipping, certainly," said my mother; "but they are very much in character with the tythe barn."

"Well, I'm monstrous glad you like 'em," said Mrs. Thacker, "because you are a lady of excessive high taste, and have lived in London as *vell* as myself. And pray what does your Ladyship think of the brown tammy?"

"I admire it exceedingly," answered my mother. "Your idea of a shepherd and shepherdess would have been charming, if you had assembled us on a lawn; but as you have made such a beautiful cell for your refreshments, you have done perfectly right to place them under the care of a pair of hermits."

Mr. Sharp now led fair Eleanor to the top of the room, and held himself in readiness to begin the dance: Mr. Francis Elrington made his bow to me, and we followed: Montgomery joined us, with Miss Elrington: Henry sat by my mother, and left Miss Elizabeth to whoever might sue for the honour of being her partner. A little smart sprig of a clergyman obtained it; and, the other young people having formed themselves into couples, we began to dance.

When Mr. Sharp had occasion to take my hand in the dance, he nodded his head; and, with a familiar smile, said, *How do you do?* When he met me a second time, he said, *How do you do by this time?* When a third, *How do you do again?* A ceremony he scarcely ever failed to perform during the whole evening.

This extreme solicitude after my

health reminded me of the answer made on such an occasion by the great Mr. Walker, of Rotheram, the founder of the fortune of a numerous family; and if I had dared to take the liberty Mr. Walker did, I should have made Mr. Sharp the same reply.

The old gentleman was going to London in a post chaise, with a friend, to obtain a patent for some mechanical invention; and, being absorbed in his own plans, was silent. The companion, determined to make himself agreeable, after a ride of some miles, said, How do you do, Mr. Walker?" "I'm very well, thank you," answered Mr. Walker, dryly, and resumed his meditations. A short time after, the companion made another effort to be sociable, by repeating his question. Vexed to be again interrupted, Mr. Walker replied, "I'm much the same

as when you asked me before. If I ail aught I'll tell you."

To return to Mrs. Thacker's ball.—After two dances we sat down, I placed myself on one side my mother, and Henry rose to make room for Eleanor on the other. She took the offered seat with a slight bow, and three quarters of a smile; but before she was fixed in it, Mr. Sharp had squeezed himself in, at her elbow. Henry then walked to another part of the room.

"O dear," said Mr. Sharp to me, across Eleanor and my mother, "we have had what I call the very *pleasantist* and *agreeablist* dance that *iver* I had in all my life. Have not we Miss Mowbray?"

"Pray," said Eleanor to me, reaching before my mother, and of course, turning her back to Mr. Sharp, "are

not we to change partners every two dances?"

"I hope we are," answered I. "Does not your Ladyship think so?"

"Certainly," replied my mother. "I will speak to Mrs. Thacker about it."

My mother then left us, and I kept her seat vacant a few minutes, to see if Henry would take it; but though he observed us at a distance, he made no attempt to come nearer. Mr. Sharp's animal spirits ran over into a thousand monkey tricks. He snatched Eleanor's fan; tapped her on the shoulder with it; then fanned her; then himself. "Now," said he, "do tell me what you two and Lady Winterdale have been saying. I would give a guinea to find it out. I should like, of

all things to know what ladies say when they whisper."

"They whisper that you may not know," said I.

Then it's no good, I'm sure," returned he.

"To convince you it is not bad, I will tell you," said I. "Lady Winterdale thinks we are to change partners every two dances, and she is gone to ask Mrs. Thacker."

Mr. Sharp jumped off his seat like a squirrel, exclaiming, "Not bad! It's too bad!" and went immediately to Mrs. Thacker; my mother and Henry making part of the same groupe.

"I find," said he, "there is a plot going forward to part me and Miss Mowbray, but we shall not suffer any *sich* a thing. I know your Ladyship is afraid of me; for you would not trust me in the post chaise, when we went to

the ball; but we know one another better now, and I assure you we won't be parted."

"Fiddle, faddle," said Mrs. Thacker: "every one in his turn. You must not think of *mopolizing* Miss Mowbray. Besides, it's quite ungenteel. At all these *here* grand private dances, if there is ever such a *quantity* of people, they are supposed to be friends, and they chop and change, and every one has the same chance as another."

"You might let Miss Mowbray and me keep together, if it was not quite the fashion," said Mr. Sharp; "as this is your own ball, and I am my uncle's own nevvy."

"Impossible!" said Lady Winterdale. "You could not set an example, and forbid your company to follow it."

"O," said Mrs. Thacker, "we

know better than that. You have committed one *congruelty* already, in leading Miss Mowbray to the top of the room, before Miss Montgomery. To be sure clergymen's daughters are ladies all the world over, as well as clergymen's *vives;* but they can't take place of the daughter of a knight and *baroknight.*"

"Well," said Mr. Sharp, "if I must submit, I must; but I'll go, this minute, and carry her the ill news; and I'll secure her for *ivery* second two dances, throughout the whole evening."

The next two dances I danced with Montgomery, and Eleanor with Mr. Francis Elrington; and, before they were finished, Henry attended my mother into the drawing room, and we saw him no more till supper.

To give you an account of our sup-

per so soon after our dinner, would be to pall your appetite: it is enough to tell you that it was good and abundant. When it was ended, we again adjourned to the ball room.

As several of the gentlemen remained at table with Mr. Thacker, Miss Elrington was left without a partner. Henry, who had not yet arrived at that pitch of good breeding which could stare an unengaged young lady in the face, and say, with a smile, *Why don't you dance? I wonder you won't dance!* begged to have the honour of going down the next two dances with her. Eleanor was dancing with Mr. Sharp; he having executed his threat of engaging her for every two alternate dances, during the evening.

When they were ended, Eleanor took advantage of Mr. Sharp's quitting her a moment, to take my arm, and

lead me into the hermit's cell. So soon after supper it was empty, and we seated ourselves in an obscure corner, where we might converse, unseen and unheard by any. "Charlotte," said the poor girl, "is this pleasure? Is this amusement? I love dancing; but what have I suffered from the incessant teazing of Mr. Sharp! I am so weary, and so angry, that I could call him names!"

"Pray do, my dear," said I; "it will relieve your troubled spirit."

"An empty coxcomb!" cried she, "a persecuting, busy, medling intruder! He love! He loves nothing but to hear himself talk! I begin to think society ought to be regulated upon Mr. Winterdale's plan; that we should have the liberty to tell people when we are tired of them."

"That were a glorious privilege;" said I; "but in the present instance it would avail nothing. Mr. Sharp would not believe you, and would endeavour to argue you out of your feelings."

"And Henry by, too," resumed Eleanor! "What must he think of me that have no eyes, no ears, but for Mr. Sharp, during a whole evening."

"I hope he pities you," said I; "for you certainly deserve it."

"I hope he does," returned Eleanor; "but, after what you have told him, it is possible he may think I listen voluntarily to such superlative nonsense."

At that moment Mr. Sharp popped his head into the grotto, in search of us. He looked round, but, as we were seated in a recess, and obscured by a broad

mossy pillar, he did not discover us. Henry looked in soon after, with the same view, and with the same success. He was retiring, when we came forward, and I said, "Henry, you have scarcely spoken to us, during the whole of this rural fête."

"You have been much better employed than in listening to me," replied Henry. "At home my conversation may be acceptable: but I dare not presume to intrude here."

"O," said Eleanor, "if you did but know"——she stopped, seeing Mr. Sharp again at the entrance of the grotto.

"If I did but know what?" asked Henry, who had his back to the door: but, before she could answer, Mr. Sharp cried, "So, I have found you at last! I have been hunting for you this

half hour. I have been here before; and I have been into the house, and *ivery* where in the world; and I have asked Lady Winterdale, and my aunt, and nobody knew what was become of you. I suppose you hid yourself o'purpose to be found out. The two dances are almost finished, and it's our turn now. We shall have the very *charmingist* dance that *iver* we had in all our lives. Come," continued he, taking Eleanor's hand, "we shall be too late." He then led his captive triumphantly into the ball room. I would have stopped Henry, but he was gone.

At the commencement of the next two dances Eleanor was without a partner, and, as her kind stars would have it, without Mr. Sharp; he being obliged to dance with one of the town Misses.

She was sitting alone, when Henry came to her, and asked her why she did not dance? She replied, she had no partner. He then asked if she would accept of him, rather than sit still? Her sweet face brightened up in a moment; and she gave him her hand, without speaking.

Now did Eleanor dance indeed. Her soul was in every movement, and she scarcely touched the ground. Surely pains were sent us to enhance our pleasures! Had the charming Eleanor not been doomed to undergo the mortifying persecutions of Mr. Sharp, she had not known the transport she now experienced in being the partner of Henry Winterdale. Henry is one of the finest dancers I ever saw; and they were the admiration of the whole company. But that was the least part

of the satisfaction. It is the man, and not the manner of moving his legs and arms, that makes the partner.

The two dances ended, Eleanor sat down. Henry placed himself next her, on one side, and she gave a beseeching look to me, to take the other; thereby excluding Mr. Sharp. He came to claim her, instantly; but she told him, with firmness, she should dance no more that night. He argued, and persuaded, and teazed, and remonstrated; but Eleanor was immoveable; and I believe the universe could not have prevailed upon her to have danced again, except with Henry.

"I shall not suffer two ladies to sit together, *howiver*," said Mr. Sharp. "I am resolved to part you two."

"You take a liberty that I durst not, Sir," said Henry.

"O," rejoined Mr. Sharp, "fortune favours the bold. Ladies do not like to sit together, *howiver*, they may make believe."

"These ladies are an exception to that rule," said Henry: "they do not like to be parted."

"They may say so," said Mr. Sharp; "but I know better."

"We shall teach you better still," said I, putting my arm in that of Eleanor. Mr. Sharp then had recourse to, "Now, do! Now, pray, do! Now, this once!" but, finding all his eloquence thrown away, he left us, to teaze somebody else.

At parting Mrs. Elrington told my mother, she should have left her name at her gate, on her marriage, notwithstanding the law-suit, if she had thought it would have been agreeable to her and Mr. Winterdale.

"I assure you," said my mother, "it would be extremely agreeable to me to cultivate the acquaintance of such neighbours; but I cannot undertake to answer for Mr. Winterdale. You know his singularities, perhaps, better than myself. To restore him to society must be a work of time, and it will be attended with great unwillingness on his part; but I do not altogether despair of it: and if you do me the honour to make me a visit, you must allow me to return it by Miss Montgomery and Miss Mowbray, who ride on horseback; for, at present, I have no carriage; and, till Mr. Winterdale indulges me with one, it is as impossible for me to reach your house, as the dominions of the Great Mogul."

The Elringtons told my mother they should be proud of her acquaintance on her own terms.

After we had taken leave of the Vicarage, I know not how it was, but by some chance or other, I found my arm in Montgomery's; and, looking behind me, I perceived the same chance had happened to Henry and Eleanor. Mr. Sharp skipped about, and looked as if he had lost something; but, finding he could do no better, he offered his arm to Lady Winterdale.

I declare to you, my dear Harriet, that I neither thought the way long or rugged. On the contrary, I found the walk so very delightful; here, a broad mass of shade, from the venerable oaks; there, the silver moon, soft glimmering through the birches; and, bye and bye, the open expanse of a cloudless sky; that I regretted not the elegant chariot, which used to convey me home after a ball.

Dancing introduces a kind of familiarity that would be quite inadmissable in a drawing room. When a gentleman solicits the honour of your hand, it is not a figure of speech; your hand really belongs to him, for the time; and if he persists in taking it a little after the time, it would be very ill-natured to withdraw it—unless one did not like him. For my part I found something so admirably persuasive in the touch of the hand of the man I do like, even through two pair of gloves, that I could not find in my heart to cut short its eloquence.

The village bell told three as we reached the hall. Mr. Montgomery and Mr. Sharp made their bows at the door; the one getting into a post chaise which waited to carry him to

the town; the other walking back to the Parsonage.

Believe me, my dear Harriet,

Ever your's,

CHARLOTTE MONTGOMERY.

LETTER XXXVII.

TO MISS CASTLEMAIN.

Winterdale, Aug. 15, 1812.

MY DEAR HARRIET,

Since I wrote last I have lost my lover, and Eleanor has gained one. Montgomery is gone to join the regiment at Newcastle. Our parting was more tender than I shall confide to you, lest my pensorosos should appear ridiculous; be content to know that he vowed unalterable love.

Stop, Charlotte, I hear you say, are you not already ridiculous? What, in this world, is unalterable? My dear, you cavil at words. I am sensible, as well as yourself, that every thing we know is perpetually changing; that every leaf

and tree; every particle of earth; every stone, metal, and mineral; are continually varying in substance, or quality, or both; that the body of man is every moment increasing or diminishing in bulk, and softening or hardening in texture; and shall his mind alone be permanent? I am too much a philosopher to expect it.

Let the love of Montgomery change. Let it increase as much as you please. When we may have been wedded some fifty years, let it even have changed its nature, and become like that of Darby and Joan. So he still love, and love me alone; I am content.

Before I see Montgomery again he will have made a personal attempt to reconcile his father to his exchanging his sword for a reaping hook, his spear for a ploughshare (if I quote the expression right, and if I do not, look into your

Bible and correct me) and the colours of his King for mine. Awful matters, these, on which the happiness of my future life depends. He requested permission to write me an account of his good or ill success, which I granted without hesitation.

Some very prudent ladies might, perhaps, be startled at a young woman's entering into a correspondence with her lover. I hope you are not of the number. I know of no duty that forbids it; and I beseech decorum to pardon me, if I unwittingly sin against it. The days of entrapping unwary damsels, and either leading them into naughty houses, or forced marriages, are past; and I cannot help being of opinion that a woman may command respect from her lover, by pen and ink; or forfeit it, by improper conduct, though she be too scrupulous to write.

I would not be understood to reflect upon poor Clarissa Harlowe, whose behaviour would have secured her chastity against any man of mortal mould. Lovelace, a systematic, persevering, unfeeling, libertine, either was not of mortal mould, or the race is, happily, become extinct.

As I can never be out of my way, my dear Harriet, when writing to you, I will venture to say a few words on Richardson's Novels; a subject on which there have been many critics and many different opinions. They are a species of lengthened drama, of which he was the sole inventor. Life is brought before one in detail, and fictitious characters are made to speak and write with an air of reality. The present point of view is seldom particularly interesting; but the whole is irresistible.

Richardson must have written with

ease. Perhaps his greatest difficulty, like that of an author of the present day, Mr. Pratt, might have been to reject and compress what was already written; and perhaps their works might have been still improved, if each had rejected more.

Richardson is styled by a contemporary novel writer, whose work I remember to have met with among some old books of my grandfather's, *The author of Clarissa Harlowe, whose patience nothing could equal, but that of his readers.* The critic and his work are alike forgotten; while succeeding generations will have the patience to read Clarissa Harlowe.

Lady Mary Wortley Montague appears to me to give the most just and natural account of Clarissa Harlowe that I have seen; but as I have not her letters, I may not do justice to it. The

work was sent her, with other books, when she was residing abroad. She was struck with its novelty; she complained that the incidents were trifling, and that the manners of high life were not faithfully depicted. She went on. She found one character like herself; another like her father; another like what she had heard of her mother. At last, all faults forgotten, she burst into tears, and thus gave an unequivocal testimony in favour of the book.

What opinion Lady Mary entertained of Sir Charles Grandison I do not recollect. I only remember that she speaks of the behaviour of Charlotte Grandison, afterwards Lady G. in terms of just reprehension. I have always thought her flippancy and pertness to her Lord unpardonable; and I have sometimes thought that she was indebted for her wit to her arch look, which we

are frequently told was called in to its aid.

Richardson's novels have produced an effect in the female world that their author, probably never foresaw. Learning, before his time, was a serious thing; the woman who attained a share of it was esteemed a prodigy; and, without it, she could hardly dare to take a pen in hand. He shewed women that they might write without learning; that they might be pleasing and interesting authors, by the talents, alone, which God had given them. They left off making puddings and pies, on the discovery, and betook themselves to writing letters; and, from the days of Clarissa Harlowe and Anna Howe, to those of Charlotte Montgomery and Harriet Castlemain, the world has been inundated, and, doubtless, much improved, by female epistolary writing.

Speaking of Lady Mary Wortley induces me to mention Mrs. Vigor, whose Letters from Russia may be read with pleasure after the celebrated letters of that lady from Turkey. Mrs. Vigor's talents have not the strength of those of her fair predecessor in the diplomatique corps; but her wit and vivacity, when combined with her subjects, are sufficient to render her work extremely entertaining. It is not to be bought. Perhaps, while the public taste is indulged with daily novelties, it may not be worth the while of the literary cooks to serve an old dish up again; though composed of excellent ingredients.

One transgression leads to another, and one digression to another. By a very easy transition, my correspondence with Montgomery brought me to Clarissa Harlowe; Richardson to Lady Mary Wortley Montague; and her La-

dyship to Mrs. Vigor. Here I ought to quit my devious path, and get into the right road; but I have an inclination to let my pen run away with me; and, now I am in company with female literati, to introduce you to another, instead of Miss Mowbray's lover; as I intended, when I began my letter: and you will the rather pardon me for deferring the pleasure you are to receive in his society, as you will probably have conjectured it to be Mr. Sharp.

The lady I mean is a humble poetess, unknown to fame, of the name of Mary Jones; who, with great diffidence, and at the request of friends, and for the support of an aged and infirm mother, published, in the year 1750, an octavo volume of verse and prose. By the date, you will observe she is not of the Richardsonian school; and, with deference be it spoken, she possesses an ener-

gy which some of Richardson's ladies do not. Her letters were written from 1732 to 1750.

That the friends who advised her to publish were in the right, and that the end for which she published was answered, their number sufficiently proves. Her subscribers amount to upwards of fifteen hundred, and are as remarkable for rank and talents as for number. Besides the Prince and Princess of Orange, and the Prince and Princess of Nassau Orange, the list contains seven Dukes and Duchesses; fifty-one Peers and Peeresses; fifty-six other titled personages; ten Members of Parliament; and Dignitaries of the Church, and Doctors of Divinity innumerable. Among those distinguished for mental qualifications are Lord Chesterfield; the Hon. George, afterwards Lord, Lyttleton; Horace Walpole, afterwards Lord

Orford; Dr. Young; and David Garrick.

Such were the hands stretched forth to sanction the literary labours, and reward the filial piety of Mary Jones; and, if you dare trust so young a critic as myself, her productions do not disgrace her patrons. She possesses genius and depth of thought; with another talent, delivered out rather sparingly to author-essess—humour. I think her letters inferior only to those of Lady Mary Wortley, who, as I said before, stands at the head of the epistolary profession; and I think her poetry superior to the poetry of that lady. It is even, in many places, not unlike that of Pope; as an instance of which take the first four lines in her book:

How much of paper's spoil'd! what floods of ink!
And yet how few, how very few can think!

The knack of writing is an easy trade;
But to write well, require, at least—a head.

Perhaps, I might go on, and transcribe the whole epistle, with some few exceptions; but I will rather skip from the first poem in her book to the last; which, as the chances are much against your ever having seen or heard of Mary Jones, I will give you entire. It is addressed to her friend, Lady Henry Beauclerk, formerly the Hon. Miss Lovelace, one of the Maids of Honour to Queen Caroline.

" The summit reach'd of earthly joys,
Your nurs'ry full of girls and boys,
Your Lord in peace return'd;
Your rents improv'd, your lands increas'd,
The good old baroness deceas'd,
And with due honours mourn'd;

" What more remains, but, safe ashore,
Grateful indulge the present hour,
And while you feel, impart;

Nor let a feebler pulse controul
One gen'rous purpose of your soul,
One virtue of your heart.

" The ruling passion, bold, and strong,
May struggle in the bosom long,
Yet want its time to shoot;
But when kind heav'n the soil supplies
With bolder suns, and brighter skies,
It yields its gen'rous fruit.

" Whether we view your morning scene,
A favour'd maid near Britain's queen
(The rest let envy tell)
Or now, arriv'd at noon of life,
A frugal mother and a wife,
Thus far, at least, was well.

" And thus far, too, your praise I've sung;
And still the burden of my song
Was—" Ne'er be fortune's creature."
For though she open'd all her store,
And though she gave you ten times more,
To be YOURSELF is greater.

" The songs I sung you kindly took,
And bid me put them in a book,
Because I scorn'd to flatter;
But now more *great*, that is, more *rich*,
God knows what demons may bewitch,
And spoil your honest nature.

" Should you grow artful, foolish, nice,
Or sink to sneaking avarice,
Much good may riches do ye!
But then, how simple I shall look?
Do, tear your songs, and burn your book,
" And say— I never knew ye."

I will now give you a page of prose, extracted from the last letter of Mary Jones to the same lady, on the subject of the publication of her works.

——" The thing I was mentioning to your Ladyship at the Lodge, and which you've often hinted to me, among the rest of my friends, I'm now coming towards a resolution of putting in execution; tho' 'tis with difficulty

I'm beginning to bethink myself of that low affair of getting money. My scattered leaves, if I can possibly collect 'em, are, I fear, at length destin'd for the press (a fate, I'm sure, never design'd 'em by me) and my sole end and aim—just as much gold as I can get for 'em: a thing I've wanted all my life, but never had sense enough to think it worth the pains some people take about it, till very lately. But as I've a vast quantity of friends—pretty near as many as David Simple—and as these are a treasure infinitely beyond guineas and half crowns; I assure your Ladyship I never had the least design upon their pockets till now. But having been at great expense of pen, ink, and paper, for their various amusement and entertainment, which they have all most kindly and cordially acknowledged in their several writings, I make no doubt of their uncommon zeal in

forwarding the subscription, and generously receiving all the half-crowns that come; though as *gold* is my ruling passion at present, I should rather prefer the half-guineas. Indeed your general and most approv'd motive for printing is *Fame*. But I've been thinking about that article; and I find two things requisite towards the attainment of so substantial a good. First, that an author be able to *write*, which is a thing I don't pretend to; and next, that the book be *read*, which is the very thing I would not have mine be. Now, as 'twould be very nonsensical to expect, what I am not so unreasonable as to desire, and, I'm confident, can never deserve; I must e'en stick to my first mover, *Riches*: and, as to the other, if it comes—why let it—but 'twill be like Falstaff's honour, unlook'd for."

I have one request to make to you, my dear Harriet, in favour of Mary Jones—that you will pardon her elisions, which have now an awkward appearance; though I believe they were more common, and better regarded in her day. When I began to transcribe I had some thoughts of restoring some of her words to their proper size, as I have reduced many of her capital letters to the present standard; but I thought it would be taking a liberty she might not approve, if she happened to be hovering over my head.

And this leads me to claim your indulgence for myself, if I should be found to require it. I believe *elisions* is the proper term for those clippings of the current language of the realm, that Mary Jones has been guilty of; but of this I am not sure. For though

I speak and write my native tongue with decent correctness, I am ignorant of grammar; as, though I know every flower of the garden, I am a stranger to botany. I like *things;* and am not very apt to blunder in my acquaintance with them; but I never could stay to be introduced to them by technical terms. If it excite your wonder that, with an education suitable to my rank, I should be unacquainted with the elements of speech, I can tell you how it happened. I was educated at home; and when my governess marshalled nouns and pronouns; verbs and adverbs; articles and particles; in terrible array before me; frightened at such a host of adversaries, I fairly ran away to my father; and besought him to save me from the combat. Sir George yielded to my intreaties; and the more readily, as, at eight years old,

I spoke and wrote with nearly the same degree of correctness that I do now.

But to return to Mary Jones. Where is she now? and where are her works? silently stolen off this worldly stage together, and *No more to be heard of or seen!* Is it not melancholy that the woman who could write so well, and who had a conference with no less a man than the author of the Night Thoughts upon "an affair that was to endure for ever," that is, the acquiring immortality by the publication of her book; should have sunk with it into total oblivion! A heavy damper, this, for the ardour of the numerous tribe of verse-writing, novel-writing, and letter-writing ladies, whose names appear in advertisements in the newspapers!

Of the many books printed, how few are sold! of these, how few are re-

printed! and, of these, how very few are written by women!

Which of us shall excel Mary Jones? Not you; or I; or Miss A; or Miss B; or Miss any letter, to the end of the alphabet. Yet I can truly say that I never heard her name mentioned in my life; that I never saw more than two copies of her book; and that I purchased one of them, from a country bookseller's catalogue, a handsome octavo volume, good condition, large paper, bound in calf, gilt and lettered, for two shillings!

When the scribblemania possesses any of us; when we are borne aloft, on the airy wings of imagination, to flights of poetry; or believe ourselves capable of mighty deeds, in the field of prose; let us----Remember Mary Jones. Our odes, narratives, and epistles, disappear almost as soon as

the plum puddings, and raised pies of our great grandmothers.

The only parts of this letter meditated by me, when I began to address you were the beginning and the end; the paragraph which informs you of the departure of Montgomery, and the assurance that I am,

Ever your's

CHARLOTTE MONTGOMERY.

LETTER XXXVIII.

TO MISS CASTLEMAIN.

Winterdale, Aug. 22, 1812.

MY DEAR HARRIET,

On the day after Mrs. Thacker's grand fête, Mr. Sharp drank tea with us. He is so omnipotent in words, that, with as narrow a range of them as ever man in his station possessed, he can create something out of nothing: judge, then, if he could want conversation after a ball. The company; the dresses; the dancing; underwent his criticisms; and every thing turned out to be, the very best, or the very worst; the very *bootifullest*, or the very *shockinest*, that *iver* he saw in all his life. Still Mr. Sharp was ill at ease.

He looked impatient, dissatisfied, apprehensive; and I saw his project in his restlessness.

Six times did Mr. Sharp observe that the evening was the very finest that *iver* he saw in all his life: nobody seconded him, or differed from him in opinion. Three times did he say it was a sin to stay in the house: nobody proposed going out. At last, Mr. Sharp asked Eleanor if she would *fetch* a walk.

"Where shall I fetch it from?" said Eleanor.

"O, dear," cried Mr. Sharp, "what a question! when there are so many charming walks in this fine old ancient park!"

"I did not know that I could bring any of them here," said Eleanor.

"O, dear, no, to be sure," said Mr. Sharp, "Who *iver* thought of any *sich*

a thing? If I did not know you was uncommonly clever, I should think you was excessively silly."

"You are really very simple, Eleanor," said my mother, with a good natured design that was wholly unnecessary, for Mr. Sharp had no idea he was ridiculed. "Mr. Sharp is perfectly right in recommending a walk this fine evening. I am sure Charlotte and Henry can have no objection to it."

This was precisely what Mr. Sharp had an objection to; but he did not dare to name it; and we set out in quest of a walk.

Mr. Sharp endeavoured to persuade Eleanor that she would soon be weary if she did not take his arm. She declared she never had less need of an arm, and marched on sturdily, without it. Truth obliges me to confess, that if she made any objections to Henry's

arm the night before, they were in a lower tone, and I did not hear them. But the difference might be in the hour; as every body knows that gentleness and softness are more in character with the modest, peeping moonbeams, than with the broad staring rays of the sun. Mr. Sharp then tried to convince Eleanor that she *was* weary; and pointed to different seats, as we passed them, very proper for weary persons; but finding all his rhetoric vain, at last he plainly told Henry and me that Miss Mowbray and himself had something to say, which they did not wish us to hear; and that, if we would walk on, they would soon overtake us.

"Indeed," said Eleanor, "I have nothing to say to Mr. Sharp that all the world may not hear," and was proceeding, when that gentleman snatched her hand; and Henry, putting my arm

in his, without speaking, we struck off into a different path. Henry was silent during the rest of our walk. I endeavoured, once or twice, to be very entertaining; but, meeting with no encouragement, I was obliged to be silent too. We soon reached the hall, where Mr. Sharp and his fair partner arrived in about half an hour. At supper Henry looked gloomy; Eleanor uneasy; and Mr. Sharp talked less than usual.

When we retired to our dressing room we dismissed Robinson, and, seating ourselves at one of the windows, I threw up the sash, and cried, "Now, in the sight of *yonder blessed moon*, tell me what unimaginable things have been said to Eleanor Mowbray, by Edmund Sharp."

"The man has made downright love to me," answered she.

"That I supposed," rejoined I: "but how? in what manner? is the question. Besides, my dear, you speak of such a marvellous event with too little reverence. Try if you cannot put it into blank verse."

"Put nonsense into blank verse!" exclaimed Eleanor.

"Not so unattainable as you imagine," said I. "The thing has often been done. However, if that be not agreeable to you, give it me in your own way; only do be very circumstantial, for I like to lose nothing of a love tale."

"Well, then," said Eleanor, "at first I was very desirous to follow you; but Mr. Sharp intreated so earnestly that I would stay and hear him, that I thought it best to comply and have done with the subject."

"You force me to chide you again,"

interrupted I. "Naughty cousin! You wish to have done with the subject; and I wish to hear a great deal. But go on."

"Now, my dear Harriet, though I am pretty dextrous at giving you question and answer, when I am one of the parties, I do not exactly know how to give you a conversation I did not hear, except at second hand. I must even proceed in the usual way, as if I were present, only requesting you to remember, for the sake of matter of fact, that I was not."

"Now I will lay you any money," said Mr. Sharp, "that you don't know what I am going to say to you."

"I do not pretend to know till I have heard it," replied Eleanor.

"But, perhaps," returned he, "you can give a *leetle* tiny bit of a guess."

"I have not the smallest idea of it," said Eleanor.

"Why, then," said Mr. Sharp, "I will tell you the long and the short of it. You must know I did not mean to marry, for I have always found a bachelor's life very comfortable, and very pleasant. One goes to bed when one has a mind; and one gets up when one has a mind; and one sits down to breakfast, and makes the tea as strong as one has a mind; and one orders what one likes for dinner; and one either goes out, or stays at home, which one pleases; and one says *nothink* to nobody. I've seen pretty girls, to be sure, and they have simpered and smiled at me, as much as to say, *Ask and have;* like the pigs in Lubberland, that run about the streets, ready roasted, crying, *Come eat me;* but I would have

none of *sich* trash. I've seen good bold girls, too, that when they come to be the wife of *sich* a man as me, would have said, *I shall do this Mr. Sharp;* and *you shall do that Mr. Sharp;* and *the tother shall be so and so, Mr. Sharp.* And I've seen *dillicut*, mincing misses, that, if I had had one of them, would have said, *Now, my dear, dear, Mr. Sharp, you sha'n't go to sich a place, I shall be so frightened;* and *you sha'n't stay out late, I shall be so uneasy:* and so, one way or another, they would *niver* let a man be his own master. But, my dear Miss Mowbray, since I have been *acquineted* with you, all these thoughts are over. If I could but persuade you to have me, I should be the happiest of *hooman creters*. If you said you would have any *think* so, I should wish it to be so; and if you was *iver* so fond of me, I should *niver* think

much of staying at home to oblige you."

Here Mr. Sharp stopped; but Eleanor continuing silent, he went on.

"Now, my dear, sweet Miss Mowbray," said he, "will you give consent?"

"If there was any chance of my accepting your offer," replied Eleanor, "I could not answer now; I should hesitate; but, as there is not, I find no difficulty in answering at once. I am much obliged to you; but I must decline it."

"Nay, now you are quite cruel," said the lover. "Sure you cannot have the heart to deny me. What shall I say to persuade you?"

"Nothing," replied Eleanor. "Unless the regard were mutual I am not to be persuaded."

"Why, that is as much as to say you

do not like me," rejoined Mr. Sharp. "I'm sure you cannot go to say you do not like me. What have I done to deserve it?"

"I have no reason to dislike you, certainly," answered Eleanor, "nor do I mean to say so; but as I feel none of that preference which might lead me to accept your proposal, and am very sure I never can feel it, I think it right to tell you so, without disguise."

"But I will not take *sich* a denial," returned Mr. Sharp. "I cannot see that there is any *think* so very abominable about me, but that a young lady may love me if she will. I will do *ivery think* in the world to make myself agreeable. I'll be a true lover, and a kind husband. You shall do *whativer* you please, and go *wheriver* you like, and carry the purse: and what can man do more? You must be very

unsatisfied, if this does not content you."

"You offer more than enough," said Eleanor; "but, without one thing, the rest are vain. I could not marry without love."

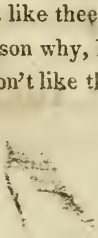
"Why, do not I love?" said Mr. Sharp. "I assure you, I love you dearly."

"Yes," replied Eleanor, "but I candidly confess I do not love you; and the affection should be mutual."

"Why, let it be *mootal*, then," said Mr. Sharp. "What should hinder it?

"It is easier to ask such a question than to answer it," said Eleanor. "Say it is fancy, caprice, insensibility, absurdity; say, as was formerly said to Dr. Fell,

"I do not like thee Doctor Fell.
"The reason why, I cannot tell;
"But I don't like thee Doctor Fell."



"Ah!" said Mr. Sharp, "that will *niver* do. Do not I know that you are neither fantastical, *insensable*, nor absurd? Do not I know that you are the very *sensablest*, *reasonablest* young young lady that *iver* I knew in all my my life? except it might be Miss Montgomery; and I don't like her so well, because she is too much like myself—she is too *Sharp*; and I don't like that horrid law suit. And, besides, what is Doctor Fell to me? I do not know him, nor *niver* heard talk of him. He might be some old parson, or physician, in a great wig; and then I'm sure no young lady could *iver* like him. My dear Miss Mowbray, I know you are joking. If you was *serus*, you would give some better reason than fancifulness and foolishness."

"I assure you most solemnly," said

Eleanor, quickening her pace, "that, let my reasons be what they may, be they founded on reality or imagination, my mind cannot change on this subject, and you will oblige me by dropping it for ever."

"Now I have once broke the ice," said Mr. Sharp, "I can tell you that will be no *sich* easy matter. I am not used to courting, and I was rather at a loss how to begin; but I find it all comes very *natteral.* I am very much in love with you, and very fond of your company, and will do *ivery think* in the world to oblige you, and you must have a heart of stone, if all this does not melt it. Love will surely bring love, and I will wait your own time."

"You will wait," said Eleanor, "till time shall be no more."

"You are very cross-grained to-night," rejoined the lover. "I am

very far from thinking as my aunt Thacker does, not but I have known several ladies think as much, that I am tall and genteel, and handsome, and rich, and good-*natered*, and a good singer, and a good dancer, and all that; but sure I am not so very *despiseable*, as for a young lady to come to go say, I may wait for her to all eternity, and perhaps she won't have me at last."

"Indeed," said Eleanor, "I would not have you wait for me one moment. I only wish to say, in the plainest and strongest terms I can devise, that if you did, it would be to no purpose."

"We shall see that," said Mr. Sharp. "Many things have happened more unlikely than a lady's changing her mind, even if that be your mind, at present. When you find me always agreeable to *ivery think* in the world,

and *niver contradicting nothink* at all, I don't see how you can *pussevere* in *sich* ill-*nater*. I shall see a pretty, sweet, lovely smile upon your face, one day or other, and I'll take you while you are in the *koomer*."

"But why," said Eleanor to me, interrupting herself, "why should I fatigue you with any more of Mr. Sharp's incorrigible folly! It is sufficient to say, that I could make use of no language to induce him to give up his pretensions, or even to doubt of their ultimate success. You will believe he could as little change my opinion of him, or my firm resolve to get rid of him, if I can. Is it not surprising, Charlotte, that a man should hope against all reason and probability?"

"It is not surprising that Mr. Sharp should," replied I; "for he is not a judge of either."

"Then let him hope," said Eleanor,

"till his intellects can discover that he has no cause. I am only sorry that an unoffending young woman, like myself, should be the object of his incessant persecution."

"That might serve one to laugh at' said I, "if Henry Winterdale were not by."

"I own," said Eleanor, "his presence makes it more grievous. I should detest myself were he to think me capable of listening to such a shallow self-sufficient babbler."

"I wish Henry would put an end to his suspicions, if he entertains any," said I, "by letting you hear what he can say on his own account."

"Ah! Charlotte," said the sweet girl, her face covered with blushes, how can you think of that. If he had any particular interest respecting me, what should prevent him from declar-

ing it? I am only desirous not to sink so low in his esteem, as any encouragement given to Mr. Sharp would make me."

"My dear cousin," said I, "by dint of a peculiar faculty I have, of diving into people's hearts, and seeing what passes there, I do believe that Henry takes a very particular interest in whatever concerns you; but there are several reasons which may prevent him from declaring it, at present. He has no establishment to offer you; his father may have other views for him; or he may he diffident of success. All men have not, like Mr. Sharp, the intrepidity to make a declaration of this kind, uncertain whether they have an advocate in your bosom; or, the determination, like him, to persevere, in spite of all assurances that they have not."

"I have not hitherto dared to men-

tion my opinion even to you, my dear Charlotte," said Eleanor; "but I cannot help thinking that Mr. Winterdale designs you for his son."

"I have had the same notion," replied I; but, as my consent would be requisite to his plan, it will certainly fall to the ground. I believe I might rest its demolition upon Henry; but I am sure I can upon myself. Henry has already asserted his independence, by going to the vicarage; and when I give up mine, said I, with a sigh, I hope it will not go out of my own family! I hope it will go either with, or to, the venerable old castle and domain, in which my ancestors maintained their's."

We then retired to rest.

Ever your's,

CHARLOTTE MONTGOMERY.

LETTER XXXIX.

TO MISS CASTLEMAIN.

Winterdale, Aug. 29, 1812.

MY DEAR HARRIET,

MR. SHARP has visited us daily since the declaration of his love for Eleanor. At her earnest supplication, I have taken care never to leave her alone with him a moment; thereby giving him another cause of dislike to myself, besides my law-suit, and what he terms, my *sharpness*, which last, I hope, has never exceeded the *retort courteous*. By way of making himself all the amends in his power, if I walk on one side of Eleanor, he plants himself on the other; if I take my chair next her's, he does the same. To render

our system of defence complete, I tell her we should have Henry for an auxiliary. Henry, however, instead of lending us his aid, keeps aloof. All attention, and brotherly kindness, when we are alone; when Mr. Sharp enters, he does not formally and officially resign his place, but, he contrives soon to leave an opening, which the other never fails to avail himself of. Henry then is occupied by something else. He reads, without knowing what book is in his hand; he looks attentively through the window, without seeing any object; or he walks out, without perceiving whither he is going. In the mean time, Mr. Sharp, wholly at his ease, and having gained his point (except in getting rid of me, whom he would willingly consign to the antipodes) entertains Eleanor with a pro-

fusion of words resembling "sounding brass, or the tinckling cymbal."

A few mornings ago Eleanor and I sat down to our work table, Henry seated himself between us, my mother took up a newspaper, and Mr. Winterdale was employed in settling some accounts; when Eleanor, opening her work box, found a beautiful needle-book, of silver fillagree. It contained a thimble of gold, a pair of scissors of the finest steel, and other trifles, of which the materials were good, and the workmanship exquisite. Every one was eager to examine it, and all were lavish in their encomiums—but how came it there? nobody knew. I looked at Henry with enquiring eyes: his eyes testified his ignorance. Robinson was summoned. She knew nothing of it.

"*A fool and his money are soon parted,*" said Mr. Winterdale, "and Sharp is the greatest fool I know."

At that instant Mr. Sharp entered the room.

"Mr. Sharp," said my mother, "you are come in time to help us to guess how this elegant little needle-book came here. For my part, I believe the house is haunted by some invisible fairy prince, who is trying to recommend himself to Eleanor; and I expect he will take off his red cap, bye and bye, and shew himself in his proper shape."

"I will take no presents from goblins," said Eleanor.

"O, dear," said Mr. Sharp, "I'm sure you may venture to take it. I dare say it was put there by flesh and blood. I have no notion of *hopgoblins*, and apparitions, and those things; not I; though I must confess I should be

frightened to death if I was to see any of them, particularly an invisible prince. But do you really like the needle-book, Miss Mowbray?

"It is the most beautiful little thing I ever saw," replied Eleanor.

"I am very happy to hear you say say so," replied Mr. Sharp—"that is, I am always happy when you are pleased; and I must own that I do think it the very prettiest, *elegantest* thing that *iver* I saw in all my life."

"Take care, Mr. Sharp," said my mother: "you are pulling off the red cap."

"Ma'am?" said Mr. Sharp "I beg your ladyship's pardon; but, indeed, upon my word, I do not understand you."

"You will turn out to be the invisible prince, yourself, I believe," said my mother.

O dear, O dear, said Mr. Sharp, I cannot imagine how your ladyship could *iver* go to think of *sich* a thing! I an invisible prince! If I was invisible, how could your ladyship see me here, cutting this bit of paper, with these scissors? and, as to a prince, I will venture to say that I am no more like a prince than I am like an old washer-woman."

"It does not signify equivocating, Sharp," said Mr. Winterdale; "you may be snipping paper, like a child in the nursery, or you may chatter like a washerwoman over the suds; but Miss Mowbray positively declares she will not keep the needle-book, unless you put it in the work box."

"O, dear," said Mr. Sharp, "what shall I do! I'am sure you are most shockingly hard upon me. I did not mean to tell; but, if I must, I must.

If *nothink* else can prevail upon Miss Mowbray to keep it, I must own, and confess, and acknowledge, that I did put it there. But the work box was open; I did not once touch the lid. I got the needle book from London o'purpose for Miss Mowbray. I am prodigiously happy she likes it; and I hope she will do me the honour, to grant me the favour of *excepting* of it."

"Pardon me," said Eleanor, "indeed I cannot."

"O, but you must," returned Mr. Sharp." "It's good for *nothink* to nobody else. Don't you see your cypher, E. M. upon *ivery think?* It cannot belong to any other lady; and we, gentlemen are out of the question; because we *niver* use *sich* things."

"Such a thing might be useful to yourself," said Mr. Winterdale, "if you cannot prevail upon the lady to

take it. I would bet sixpence you can darn a hole in your stocking, as well as your laundress."

Mr. Sharp involuntarily cast his eyes over his black silk stockings, to see if there was any darn, which might give evidence against him; then, turning to Mr. Winterdale, said "Pray, Sir, may I take the liberty to be so bold, as to ask what makes you think so?"

"I think those long, slender fingers, and that delicate white hand of your's, smell of the needle."

"O, dear, Sir," said Mr. Sharp, laughing and displaying his hand, "is that all? I'm sure I am very much obliged to you, for the compliment."

"And not without reason" said I; "for Mr. Winterdale does not scatter his compliments at random. Whenever he bestows one upon me, I look

it up in my cabinet, and rise two inches higher in my own imagination, for having such a prize in my possession."

"Mr. Winterdale is an exceeding good gentleman, indeed, when he pleases, and very diverting," said Mr. Sharp. "It always gives me the greatest pleasure upon earth to see him smile."

"I'll tell you how you may make me smile," said Mr. Winterdale.

"Pray do, Sir, returned Mr. Sharp; "I shall be excessivly *obligated* to you, and extremely happy to *contribit* to your *amoosement*."

"You contribute to my amusement every time I see you," said Mr. Winterdale; "but I fancy it would be particularly entertaining to see you hold the plough."

"Sir!" exclaimed Mr. Sharp.

"Will you oblige me by ploughing two or three furrows in that field, yonder, where the men are at work; and the ladies and I will accompany you, and witness your execution?"

"My execution, indeed, Sir! for I verily believe and think I should suffer as little to be turned off at the *gallus*, as to come to try to hold the plough, up and down that field. Besides, Sir, it is beneath a gentleman: the ladies would *niver* like me again, after it."

"The Emperor of China holds the plough every year, to let his subjects see that agriculture is not beneath their sovereign," said Henry.

"Emperors may do any *think*," said Mr. Sharp; "and I do not suppose those Emperors of the Blacks are so good as an English gentleman. I am sure you would be ashamed to hold the plough, yourself."

"Not at all," replied Henry. "I have frepuently done it, for a short time, and can plough as well as any of the hinds."

"Then you are a downright clod-hopper," said Mr. Sharp.

"Clod-hopping is a profession that I have only followed occasionally: I was not regularly bred to it," replied Henry.

"Well! I could *niver* have believed you could have done *sich* a thing at all," rejoined Mr. Sharp. "To be sure you are a gentleman, and a very genteel gentleman; but if I was to go to try to do *sich* a thing, I should be sick; and my arms would drop off my shoulders; and my shoes and stockings would be plaistered with dirt."

"If you are afraid of dirt," said Mr. Winterdale, "I could recommend

another diversion. I have a very clean barn, and you may thrash."

"You have a very singular taste, in your amusements, Mr. Winterdale," said my mother.

"Very singular, indeed," said Mr. Sharp. "Pray, Mr. Henry, do you ever thrash?"

"I have swung the flail, when I was a boy," answered Henry.

"And did not you find it shocking hard work," demanded Mr. Sharp.

"It is certainly hard work," replied Henry; "but I did not find it shocking."

"Well, I'm sure I should be shocked to death at it," said Mr. Sharp. "You must excuse me, Sir," to Mr. Winterdale, "I would do any *think* upon earth to obey your commands, and accommodate myself to your wish-

es; but, really, Sir, you set *sich rumbustical* tasks, that no gentleman, *whativer*, could have strength or spirits to go through them."

"Then sit here, and thread the ladies' needles," said Mr. Winterdale.

"That I will undertake with all the pleasure in the world," said Mr. Sharp. "Come, Miss Mowbray," added he, pulling the thread out of her needle, "give me your's, and let me try."

"Thou wert a good housewife spoiled, when nature made thee a man," said Mr. Winterdale.

Eleanor then attempted to return the needle book to Mr. Sharp. He put his hands behind him. To argue with him would have been vain; and she placed it before him on the table. "I'll not touch it," said he. "After it has been in your possession it would burn my

fingers: nay, I believe it would eat a hole through my *wescoat*, and set fire to my heart."

"Sir," said Eleanor, very gravely, "I cannot take your offered present. It is your's: do with it as you please."

"There it shall lie till doomsday, for me," said Mr. Sharp; "for I'm sure I could *niver* bear the sight of it."

"My dear Eleanor," said my mother, "you treat such a trifle too seriously. I am sorry Mr. Sharp's gallantry meets with such a mortifying reception.—There, continued she, taking up the needle book, and putting it into Eleanor's work box, I am sure you cannot refuse it now."

Eleanor slightly bowed, and said nothing; Mr. Sharp triumphed; and Henry left the room.

You will observe, my dear Harriet, that Mr. Winterdale converses famili-

arly with Mr. Sharp. This is one move in favour of my mother. It is true he only ridicules him, and that not in a very delicate manner; but, to converse at all is a great condescension; and, having made his first essay in coarse irony, and gratified his sarcastic humour, it may lead to a different kind of conversation, with different persons.

Believe me, my dear Harriet,

Ever your's,

CHARLOTTE MONTGOMERY.

LETTER XL.

TO MISS CASTLEMAIN.

Winterdale, Sept. 5, 1812.

MY DEAR HARRIET,

YOUR approbation of my flying criticisms upon books, gives me great pleasure, and emboldens me to renew the subject. They cost me nothing; for I must read; and nothing is more easy than to tell you my opinion of what I have been reading.

I am now deep in novels. If you ask leave to be witty, and observe that I am deep in shallow water, I answer, No. My authors are the ingenious Miss Edgworth, the grave Mrs. Hannah More, and the philosophical Holcroft.

The idea of Miss Edgworth's Castle Rackrent is original. In making an old servant relate the history of the family in which he has spent his days, she gives a finished picture of the manners of the Irish, from the peasant to his lord. The character of the old steward himself is well conceived, and well preserved. Half honest, half a rogue; much attached to his own interest, a little to that of his master's; and the panegyrist equally of their vices and their virtues. All is interesting, because all is natural.

Castle Rackrent determined me to read every thing of Miss Edgworth's that I could find. I could, however, only find Leonora.

The moral purpose of Leonora is to persuade woman to attend to her duties, rather than her rights. In a word, to counteract Mary Wollstonecroft. The

undertaking is laudable, and we owe Miss Edgworth our thanks; for we shall certainly gain more by practising the one than asserting the other: but to conduct her principal character with propriety and probability was not an easy task. She is represented as possessing great beauty, talents, and spirit; capable of the most violent, uncontrolable love; yet, at the same time, unfeeling, tyrannical, and selfish; a coquet, not a philosopher.

This heroine of Maria Edgworth, who loves to desperation, and cares for nobody but herself, undertakes the delicate task of seducing the husband of her best friend. No part of Mary Wollstonecroft's system this: for she invaded the rights of no other woman. To make such a heroine steal upon the affections of a sensible, worthy man, attached to an amiable wife, required

nice touches, and many of them. The thing was possible; and, with sorrow I say it, not very unlikely; but it must have been brought about by imperceptible gradations; perhaps more than are described; for if a heroine did not startle at it, an honest man certainly would, at first. Whether the husband's going such lengths as to desert a wife whom he acknowledged had not a fault, and to take her friend under his protection, be probable, I know not. I can only say that if it be, I should fear to marry Montgomery, because he was of the same species.

The wife is an angel—if angels marry; and a pattern for wives—if wives are to bear every thing, and say nothing. For my part, I have so much of the dross of humanity in my composition, that I should plainly have told my husband of my extreme affection

for him, and my insupportable agony at seeing another rob me of his; and I should have dismissed the heroine from my house before matters had come to the worst. However, Leonora's way, aided by a good fit of sickness on his side, and good nursing on her's, reclaimed the rover; and that was enough.

The English General, and the French Gabrielle, the friends and correspondents of the two sinners, are characteristic and well drawn.

I have heard Cœlebs called the best novel in the English language. Mrs. Hannah More says "The novel reader will reject it as dull, and accuse it of excessive strictness." In this point I have not the presumption to differ from the learned authoress. Wicked novel reader as I am, I confess that, in some of her long arguments, I turned over six leaves, instead of one! The work is

so *parsonic;* so *prelatic;* that it requires no small portion of filial piety towards Mother Church, to be sensible of all its merit; as it requires no small degree of loyalty to conceive "our excellent sovereign had no other fault than that of being born in June;" meaning, thereby, that the celebration of his birth-day kept the fashionable world too long out of the country.

Hannah More contrasts the opinion of the novel reader with that of the religious reader, and proceeds to say, that "The latter will throw her work aside as frivolous, and accuse it of censurable levity." In this particular I do venture to differ from her. I have had very little acquaintance with those christians she calls "high professors;" but the little I have seen of them confirms me in the opinion that they will not like a godly book the worse for being amus-

ing. As works of entertainment are interdicted by their creed, and supposed to belong to the Prince of Darkness, they will rejoice to find one on their side of the question. Cœlebs will be taken from the shelf with the Pilgrim's Progress, and the religious Courtship, and read with avidity by all young professors, and not a few of the old.

Hannah More's ideas of female education are excellent; and it is to be presumed she teaches what she recommends; but when they are so often inforced; and it is, at the same time, remembered that she keeps a ladies' boarding school; it reminds one of a hand-writing against the wall, that one has frequently seen, in large letters, in a country town, Children taught here.

The style of Cœlebs is very fine; but it is artificial.

It is so long since I read the Hugh Trevor of Holcroft, that I shall not trouble you with any particulars on that subject. The general impression which remains on my mind is admiration, without alloy.

Anna St. Ives is written, as the author, himself, declares, to inculcate the lesson of fortitude to females. I admire her fortitude; but I think her rather too philosophical, for a young lady. The father is natural and well drawn. The shrewd, purse-proud, fawning, arrogant, steward is well imagined and well supported; though his orthography is not fitted to his station; or, indeed, to any station; for no manager of a considerable estate could be so ignorant, and no ignorance could be so uniform.

The lesson taught by Bryan Perdue is excellent, and openly avowed—That human life is too lightly disposed of by

our laws; that the guilty are often capable of reformation, generally of utility; and that they should be improved and employed, rather than exterminated.

In the first volume the author keeps back his story, and is, what he calls, sportive. If his language were less dignified, I should call it flippant. No man should ever have taken the liberty to sport with his readers, but Sterne; whom, probably, Holcroft had in view; and who trifles so gracefully that the affront is forgotten. In the second and third volumes of Bryan Perdue the narrative becomes more rapid, and very interesting. It is a second George Barnwell, without being an imitation of the first.

Holcroft's characters are not wholly angelic or diabolical. They are human; and, therefore, a mixture of good and evil.

In his style Holcroft is what the painters call a mannerist. We have each a mode of expression peculiar to ourselves; as we have each a different tone of voice, and a different gait in walking. Reading, and good company may improve one of these; the music master another, and the dancing master the third; but they cannot be varied beyond a certain pitch, without affectation, which is detestable. Let an author then be known by his style; but Holcroft's style does not vary sufficiently with his subject and his characters. He is always philosophical; and that is being too much so.

Thus, my dear Harriet, have I dispatched religion and philosophy, Hannah More and Holcroft. Have I, then, neither religion or philosophy myself? I hope a little of both; but they are of a very simple kind. The one requires me

to "do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with my God;" the other bids me be content with a world I cannot mend.

You have now another sheet of my humble criticisms upon novels. If you should take a fancy to substitute the word *saucy*, for *humble*, I will not dispute with you upon terms. But, though I have decided in the absolute tone of a Kotzebue, to save time and ink, I beg you to insert, *In my opinion*, *It appears to me*, or any other such like diminutives, as often as you may think it necessary.

After all, my dear Harriet, it is a mortifying reflection, that an author, when he publishes a book, constitutes every creature that reads it his judge; and that even an insignificant girl, like myself shall be intitled to decide upon the

merits of such literary giants as Holcroft, and Hannah More!

I allow you to doubt any of my assertions, except that

I am truly your's,

CHARLOTTE MONTGOMERY.

LETTER XLI.

TO MISS CASTLEMAIN.

Winterdale, Sept. 12, 1812.

I had a letter from Montgomery, dated Newcastle, which, though very acceptable to myself, contained nothing necessary for you to know; and I have another, written from his father's which shocks my feelings: but I kiss the rod; being well aware that I have deserved to smart under it.

Montgomery finds Sir James inexorable. He regards my mother as an artful, designing woman, who has drawn Mr. Winterdale in, to pay her debts; and me as the worthy daughter of such a parent, supplying extravagance

by desperate resources. There is too much truth in these charges for them to be repelled by me; and I cannot wonder that Sir James Montgomery, believing himself the rightful owner of the estate, and that he shall shortly have it in his possession, should disclaim an alliance with so unworthy a part of his family.

But, my dear Harriet, tell me; for my own judgment cannot clearly decide the question; am I really an abandoned young woman, a disgrace to an honourable family? or is my fault that of an inexperienced, giddy, girl, which may be expiated by time, and better conduct?

Montgomery makes no apology for disclosing to me the obstinate prejudices of his father. His heart, he says, dictates the communication of every circumstance, and every thought; and nothing shall it ever hide from me. His letter breathes the tenderest affection; and

assures me of the countenance and support of his mother; who, I suppose, is of a softer mould than the nabob, her husband. Finally, he implores me to allow him to come hither, the moment his family have set out, on a tour they are going to make; and conduct me to Scotland, there to be indissolubly united to him. That ceremony irrevocably past, he says, my own merit cannot fail of being duly appreciated; and my mind and manners must claim the respect that one false step, magnified by malice and loquacity had forfeited.

My resolution remains unshaken. No, Montgomery, I will not be your's clandestinely. I will not again degrade myself by an action that shall require concealment. Stay till the laws of my country allow me to be a competent judge of my own conduct; and I will

be your's, in the face of God and man, and brave all consequences.

The Elringtons have called upon us, and were admitted; Henry, Eleanor, and I returned their visit; and, yesterday the whole family dined with us, by invitation. I begin to discriminate their characters.

Mr. Elrington is a tall, large, well-looking man; his features are broad and capacious; and his complexion is of a hue between purple and crimson. He is what is called an excellent companion, and a clever fellow. He will hunt, in a morning, and be in at the death; shoot, and load his man with game; ride to the next town for news, and bring it to his village before the post. At dinner he will take as much wine as any man, and carry it as steadily. In the evening he will play a good rubber at whist; tell a good story; sing a good song;

make a great noise, and be what is called the fiddle of the company. His voice is strong; he laughs much; and generally smiles when he speaks—except when he speaks to his wife.

Mrs. Elrington is an interesting woman; pale, very thin; with a good understanding, a mild disposition, and a weak, though musical voice. Her soul seems all harmony, and her manners all softness. It is understood that Mr. Elrington's estate was deeply mortgaged when he married this lady, and that her large fortune retrieved his affairs. What has she in return for such winning qualities, and such substantial aid? It may be love at the bottom; but it is like the countryman's dirty road—a terrible long way to the bottom. The best of what is apparent, is neglect; the rest, contradiction and

a superciliousness, bordering upon contempt.

The Misses Elrington I will introduce to you together; for I know not how to separate them. If one begin to tell you a story, the other takes it up immediately, and relates it at the same time, and almost in the same words, to her neighbour. If you sit between them you are miserable; for they both, at once, tell it to yourself. They are reading ladies; and as ready in giving their joint opinions of books, as men; and they are chemical and botanical ladies; speaking fluently on oxygen, hydrogen, and gas; anthera, pistillum, and pericarpium. Add to all this an hereditary contempt for Mrs. Elrington, not openly expressed, like that of their father, but sufficiently obvious, and you have the outline of these young ladies.

Mr. Francis Elrington is of a better nature, and partakes largely of the mildness and moderation of his mother.

You may imagine we had not this family visit without much confusion at the old hall. Mr. Winterdale flew in a passion on the first intimation of it; and repeated the upbraidings you have heard before; but as he could neither move his lady's temper, nor her purpose, he was obliged to give up the point. He would not see our guests, however, but rode over to the town and took a mutton chop, and three or four glasses of red port, with his worthy solicitor, Mr. Foreclose; and uncharitable though you may have thought me, I have no doubt that the Elringtons suffered more in their description than they have done in mine. Henry Winterdale, though he had no communication with them before, took his father's

place, and did the honours of the house with a dignity and grace all his own.

Mrs. Thacker was of the party, and took no small pride in letting the Elringtons see the familiar footing she was upon with Lady Winterdale. *Your Ladyship and me* was the burthen of her song; and all that *I* had said to *her Ladyship*, and all that *her Ladyship* had said to *me*, from the very beginning of the acquaintance, was recited, with marks of peculiar satisfaction.

Mr. Sharp was here, of course; and took no less pains to shew his claim to Eleanor, than Mrs. Thacker did her's to my mother. The sweet girl silently discouraged his overwhelming nonsense; but suffered no uneasy look to intrude upon the company. Henry was obliged to listen to the eloquence of the two sisters; but he involuntarily

sent his eyes in pursuit of my lovely cousin and her tormentor; and a half suppressed sigh was sometimes the result of his observations.

As to Mr. Francis Elrington, I can make nothing of him. Just for want of some other object, I endeavoured to attract his notice; but, to my extreme humiliation, I found his eyes, too, were wandering towards Eleanor. I must either part with her, or give up universal dominion, that is certain: but female friendship, as you have long experienced, is a weighty consideration with

Your

CHARLOTTE MONTGOMERY.

LETTER XLII.

TO MISS CASTLEMAIN.

Aberystwith, Sept. 19, 1812.

MY DEAR HARRIET,

YOUR receiving a letter from this place cannot be more unexpected by you than my being here was, eight days ago, by myself; and I believe you will have to travel over the two sheets of paper which now lie under my pen, before you will have accompanied me to the end of my journey.

After I had sealed my last, as our whole family was assembled in the eating room, after dinner, we saw a very elegant coach driving along the park, and making towards the house. My

mother looked delighted; Mr. Winterdale alarmed; Henry inquisitive, and Eleanor and I astonished. For my part, I thought of Sir James Montgomery, and felt as if I were going to be called to the bar, to answer for my past offences. As the carriage approached, we perceived the blinds were drawn up; and, I believe the truth flashed upon every mind at the same moment. Mr. Winterdale bounced from the window, as if a musquet had been aimed at him, from the coach-box, exclaiming, "This cannot be your doing, Lady Winterdale?"

"Indeed it is," replied my mother; who never wastes any words, at the first onset.

"It is not possible," rejoined her husband, "that you could have had the impudence to order a carriage and buy horses, without my knowledge?"

"It is not only possible, but certain; that I have done it," said my mother; "though that low-bred creature, impudence, had no concern in the matter."

"Impudence!" repeated Mr. Winterdale. "Nothing but the impudence of a highwayman, and a pickpocket could have done it."

"I have no acquaintance with that sort of people," said my mother: "the deed is all my own."

"Buy a carriage and horses without asking my consent!" cried Mr. Winterdale. "Daring and unfeeling as you are, I cannot believe it."

"You may be assured it is a fact," said my mother; "and the only reason why I did not ask your consent was, that I knew I should not obtain it."

"Base, ungrateful woman!" returned Mr. Winterdale. "You shall find

it necessary still;" and he rang the bell with violence.—"Mendall," said he, when the man entered the room, "tell that rascal to drive his horses and carriage back again instantly. They shall not enter my gates."

"Sir," replied Mendall, "the carriage is in the stable yard, and the horses are going into the stable."

"Mendall," said my mother, before Mr. Winterdale had time to speak, "your master has no objection to the horses having a feed of corn.—You may go."

Mendall seemed glad of the permission, and left the room.

"Lady Winterdale," said her husband, "it is to no purpose that you think to make a fool of me, as you have done; for, by G—, they shall not stay here."

"Mr. Winterdale," replied my

mother, raising her voice, for the first time, since her marriage, "you presume upon my affection for you, and my peaceable temper, to provoke me beyond sufference. You have thwarted me in every wish of my heart, since I have been your's, and I have taken your ill-humour and ill-manners patiently; but beware how you drive me too far. I have the spirit of a lion when it is rouzed, and I beg you to let it sleep in quiet. I *will* have the carriage. The coachman has my orders to remain here with it; and let me see who dares to move him."

Mr. Winterdale seemed thunderstruck. At length he said, "give me leave to ask you one question, Madam, without rouzing the wild beast you threaten to let loose upon me. Did you, or did you not, make it one of the conditions of your becoming my wife,

that you should do without a carriage?"

"I did," replied my mother; but let me ask you half a dozen questions." Have not I tried all in my power to do without a carriage? and do not I find it impossible? Have not I stayed at home till I have almost taken root in your old floors? Did not I run a risque of being buried in mud, when I went to the Vicarage? and have not I been obliged to send Charlotte and Eleanor to Mrs. Elrington's, because I could not trapse four miles on foot, and clamber over hedges and ditches, gates and stiles?"

"I will answer all these questions with a couple. Is not this park spacious enough to prevent your growing to old floors? and what necessity was there to go to Thacker's or Elrington's at all?"

"What necessity!" repeated my mother. "The common usages of the world, to be sure. Do you think people marry to be stationed in a park, like an oak tree? Do you think I shall be content to vegetate within the circle of your high stone wall? Do you think Miss Montgomery and Miss Mowbray will each pay two hundred pounds a year for her board, and not have the use of a carriage? My dear," continued my mother, addressing herself to Eleanor, who was going to speak, "I know you never said any thing to me about it; but I am too good a judge of propriety not to own it is your due; and Mr. Winterdale will be of the same opinion, when he comes to reflect."

"Reflection can only confirm me in the assurance that it is contrary to your

promises, and to my habits and expectations."

"All that may be. Your habits and expectations were wrong; essentially wrong; and my promises, it seems, were built on no better a foundation; for you see it is not in human nature that I should keep them."

"Perhaps it is not in human nature to prevent your running out my fortune as you have done your own."

"Why, yes, I believe it is. The experience I have had of creditors and duns makes me a little afraid; and I hope, for the future, I shall keep within bounds. But, Mr. Winterdale, sum up my offences. The wife of a man of good family, and six or seven thousand a year estate, with a stupendous hoard of ready money, insists upon keeping a carriage, and one, poor, pair of horses; and visiting her neighbours! For these

mighty transgressions you have been chiding me, nay, abusing me, with language becoming your own blacksmith, ever since I have been your wife."

"Your Ladyship forgets one thing in summing up your offences; the deceit you practised, to draw me in to be your husband; and the large sums I have paid, and have yet to pay for that honour."

"Pardon me, I do not forget it; but I am afraid it is not quite justifiable, and so I did not bring it into the account against myself. But, Mr. Winterdale, I have heard enough of it from you, as well as of every other fault, that is, every other action of my life, since you favoured me with the empty title of Mistress of your impregnable castle, while you meant to keep the post of sole master of it yourself.

All this I have borne with an invincible sweetness of temper."

"Insensibility, you mean."

"If insensibility has been my failing, you shall find it so no longer. I will now freely talk of *your* faults: I will tell you what *you* are; and what reformation I expect from the man I am to pass my days with."

We were all frightened. Mr. Winterdale among the rest.

"With a fortune," continued my mother, "on which society has a hundred claims; which ought to have procured you the respect of your equals, and the blessings of your inferiors, you are despised by the one, feared by the other, and shunned and detested by all. Your very servants would seek a better master, if Mendall had not acquired an influence over you, which shields them from your tyranny and

suspicion. With an understanding capable of directing your own conduct, you not only submit to his management, which he turns to your honour and advantage; but to that of a despicable, petty-fogging attorney, who encourages you in litigation with your neighbours, and picks your pocket of more money than would gain you a good name among them, if properly disposed of.

"And now, Mr. Winterdale, as I have told you what you *have* done, I will tell you what you *shall* do. You shall stop all proceedings against Mr. Elrington, for the trespass; you shall take all your affairs out of the hands of Mr. Foreclose, and employ some more reputable agent: you shall live in amity and social intercourse with your neighbours, and in confidence and kindness with your servants: you shall keep

the carriage, and horses, and coachman, which have led to this fortunate explanation; and we will all go to Brighton, for a month, and forget past grievances."

"I go to Brighton!" said Mr. Winterdale, with a piteous face, and a dismal groan. "I go across the kingdom, to that sink of dissipation and extravagance! surely you cannot be serious!"

"I am very serious in my determination to use my carriage, now I have it: and in insisting upon the company and protection of my husband," said my mother; "but if you have any particular objection to Brighton, name some other place."

"If we must go," said Mr. Winterdale, "I should think Aberystwith better, as it is nearer, and less expensive."

"Aberystwith let it be, then," replied my mother, softening her voice. "All places are alike to me, with the pleasure of your company; but, my dear Mr. Winterdale, some watering place is necessary for your first entrance into the world; and you will find it easier to shake hands with strangers on a parade, than to receive your neighbours at your own house, or visit them at their's."

"Good God!" cried Mr. Winterdale, "am I to shake hands with Elrington? and even with that scoundrel Thacker? What will the world say? That I am under petticoat government, at least!"

"The world is a many-headed monster that nothing can satisfy," replied my mother; "and its hissings and barkings are not worth a thought. But it will say, 'Mr. Winterdale has re-

flected on his past conduct and amended it:' or, if it say, 'his wife spoke reason, and he had the good sense to listen to her,' where is the harm of it?"

"Reason and you, together, are too much for any common man, I am sure," said Mr. Winterdale—"But tell me, am I to visit Elrington and Thacker?"

"Mr. Elrington, certainly," answered my mother, "and every other gentleman within the distance of a dozen miles. I shall desire Mr. Elrington to make them all understand that their visits will be acceptable to you. As to Mr. Thacker, he has treated you very ill, and I give him up to your discretion. I have no interest in his reformation."

"That is some comfort, however," said Mr. Winterdale. "But am I to

keep that coxcomb of a coachman, with thirteen capes to his driving coat?"

"By no means, unless you like him," answered his lady. "Heaven forbid, that I should dictate to you in the choice of your servants. You can let Mendall pay him for his journey, and send him back; and engage one you like in his place: only remember the season is far advanced, and we set off for Aberystwith next Wednesday."

"Next Wednesday?" repeated Mr. Winterdale. "Impossible!"

"Nothing more easy," rejoined his lady. "If giving orders and making preparations are any amusement to you; with your method and dispatch, you will find more than time enough: if you do not choose the trouble, every thing will be ready, and you will have nothing to do, but step into the car-

riage. And now, Mr. Winterdale," continued she, holding out her hand, which he took, though not very cordially, " I expect a great deal of love and gratitude. Some naughty wives would have been glad to escape from their husbands; but the summit of my wishes is to take my husband with me."

" Sir," said Henry, " no pleasure can equal mine at this moment. To see my father taste the true enjoyment of life; to love and be beloved by all around him, is more than I durst hope for." His voice changed, and he turned away to hide the starting tear.

Eleanor and I each took a hand. " My dear Mr. Winterdale, how happy you make us! and may you," said one, " and you must," said the other, " be happy, yourself!"

The poor gentleman could scarcely

articulate, "Perhaps I have been to blame, as well as Lady Winterdale."

We then drew our chairs close together, and began to arrange the preliminaries of our intended journey.

My mother moved, that Mr. Winterdale and herself, Charlotte and Eleanor, do go in the coach; Mendall in the servant's seat, behind; Horton, Robinson, and part of the baggage in a post chaise; Henry on horseback, attended by Ralph; and our coachman, that is to be, go forward with his own horses.

Eleanor proposed as an amendment, that Robinson remain at home, and she and I assist one another.

Mr. Winterdale proposed as a further amendment, that Mendall stay at home, to superintend matters there; that the coachman officiate as groom; and Ralph as footman.

After an observation from my mother that Ralph was so clumsy and awkward she should be ashamed of him, and a reply from her husband that he would do very well for Wales; the amendments were carried, without one dissenting voice; and we separated to prepare for our excursion.

Thus has my mother, by the help of caustics, judiciously mixed with emollients effectually cured Mr. Winterdale of obstinacy and self will, avarice and litigation; at least, of all the outward and visible signs of these vices. The man whose habits were so inveterate, that I declared, before her marriage, I should not dare to encounter the smallest of them, has laid them all at her feet; and is to assume a set of opposite ones, at her bidding. But let no woman attempt such a conquest, if

she have any of that foolish thing called love about her; for, instead of new modelling her husband's heart, she will wring her own.

When we met again, my mother informed Mr. Winterdale that a servant had been from the Elrington's, with an invitation for us all to dine there on Monday; and that she had accepted it in his name, as well as the rest.

"How could you do so? demanded Mr. Winterdale, with terror in his countenance. I cannot go to Elrington's yet. You owned, yourself, that the accidental society of a watering-place was the best to begin with."

"I own it still," replied her ladyship; "but, as this invitation has happened, and you owe Mr. Elrington something for coming here, I think it will be a very handsome thing for you

to withdraw your action against him immediately, and go and tell him of it yourself."

"Mendall is gone to Foreclose now," said Mr. Winterdale, "with a written order to that effect; and to desire him to give up all his papers and accounts, and send in his bill."

"O, Mr. Winterdale," said my mother, "you surpass my utmost expectations. If you can do this, all the rest will be easy."

"But I cannot stand Elrington's horse-laugh," said Mr. Winterdale.

"His thanks, rather," said my mother: "but if it is possible he should be so ill-bred and unfeeling, I assure you he will attack two of us, instead of one."

Mr. Sharp was then announced. As soon as he was seated, Lady Winterdale said, "Well, Mr. Sharp, have you seen our new carriage?"

"New carriage, Ma'am, I don't know what your ladyship means," said he.

"I mean," rejoined my mother, "that Mr. Winterdale thinks it very preposterous I should walk on foot; and we have got one of the most elegant carriages you ever saw."

Mr. Sharp turned to that gentleman, with eyes that asked a confirmation of the intelligence. Mr. Winterdale looked at him stedfastly, and was silent.

"Mr. Winterdale has proposed our going to Aberystwith," continued my mother. "For my part, I should have given the preference to Brighton, or Margate; but, as Aberystwith is his choice, I shall have great pleasure in seeing the mountains and glens of Wales."

"And are you really, and indeed, going to Aberystwith, Sir?" demanded Mr. Sharp. "I thought you had been

a kind of a gentleman that had always liked to stay at home."

"He must be a very odd kind of a gentleman," said my mother, "who, because he chose to stay at home sometimes, should like to do so always."

"Well, I declare, I'm sure, I thought your ladyship was joking," said Mr. Sharp.

"I do not know any body more in earnest," said Mr. Winterdale.

"And pray, ladies," said Mr. Sharp to my cousin and me, "do you go too?"

"Yes," replied I, "it is just a family party, and nothing more"

"Well, that is delightful!" cried Mr. Sharp; "the very pleasantest thing in all the world! Now, my dear, charming, lovely, Miss Mowbray, I have one favour to beg of you, and I'm sure you can't deny me; do, pray, let me go along with you."

"It is a family party, only," answered Eleanor; "and it is not in my power to add to the number."

"Nay, now," said Mr. Sharp, "you *may* take me; for you know you can add me to the family *wheniver* you please."

Mr. Winterdale laughed; Henry looked grave; and Eleanor coloured, and seemed uneasy.

"Mr. Sharp," said I, "we are always happy to see you here; but the house we are going to at Aberystwith, cannot accommodate any body but ourselves."

"I knew you would be against me," said Mr. Sharp, "Some ladies don't like to see other ladies greater favourites than themselves."

Here I laughed; and Henry, in spite of himself, joined me.

"But," continued the gentleman, "I

don't want your house. There are lodgings enough at Aberystwith; and sure your house will hold me for a morning call. If it won't, Miss Mowbray and I can walk upon the sands, and drink the spa water together.

"There is no spa water at Aberystwith," said Eleanor, "and I am told there are no sands."

"Well, there's sea-water, or *somethink*, I suppose," returned Mr. Sharp; "and let it be *whativer* it will; if its *pyson*, I'll drink it with you."

"You must excuse me," said Eleanor. "I cannot possibly make any addition to Lady Winterdale's party."

"O, I understand you now," said Mr. Sharp, "I wonder where my wits *was*, that I did not take you at first."

"The wonder is not that you mislaid them, but that you have found them,"

said Mr. Winterdale, "for they will go into a nut shell at any time."

"Now, my dear Lady Winterdale," resumed Mr. Sharp, without noticing her husband's remark, "you see Miss Mowbray refers me to you."

"Pardon me," interrupted Eleanor, "I refer you to nobody."

"Why, did not you say, just now, that you could not consent without Lady Winterdale?"

"By no means. I said I could not consent at all."

"Ho, ho! that will *niver* do. Young ladies must not be the *explainers* of their own speeches. And so, my dear Lady Winterdale, I am sure you will take me along with you; for you are the very sweetest and best *temper'dest* lady that *iver* I knew in all my life. I am sure Mr. Winterdale, himself, could not make you cross."

"I am afraid my present temper does not deserve so fine a compliment," said my mother; for as we are going merely for the sake of the sea air, we must defer the pleasure of your company till our return."

"Your Ladyship against me too!" cried Mr. Sharp, "I could *niver* have thought it."

"The ladies use you very ill this morning, Sharp," said Mr. Winterdale; "but never mind; I will take you under my protection. They cannot hinder you from mounting your horse and riding to Aberystwith; and when you are there, I'll give you a slice of Welsh mutton; for you are the *very best and entertainingest comcompanion* that *iver I met with in all my life.*"

"O dear, Sir," said Mr. Sharp, "I vow and declare I can't tell whether

you are in joke or earnest; but I'm very much obliged to you, Sir; very much obliged to you, indeed. I see one may live and learn. I'm sure I did not think you liked good company at all, or that you liked me in *partikalar*. But pray, Sir, would it not be the same thing to you, if I was to go to Aberystwith in a post chaise? because I can't say I much fancy riding on horseback."

"You have my leave to go in a balloon, if you like it," replied Mr. Winterdale.

"Oh! horrid!" exclaimed Mr. Sharp, with a grimace. "I would not trust myself in a balloon—no, not even for the company of my dearest Miss Mowbray! No sailing among the stars for me. It is the *surprisingest* thing in the world, Sir, that any man should venture his neck at such a

height above the solid earth! I'm sure my head would turn like a weathercock. And, besides, Sir, a man, with a stout strong arm, may stop a horse: but who can either pull in a balloon, or turn it into another road? For my part, I think its quite *presumpshus*."

"I think it a little daring, myself," said Mr. Winterdale. "As we invade the dominion of the birds, without their wings, I expect we shall attempt to live among the fishes, without their fins."

"And so, to be sure we shall, indeed, Sir," returned Mr. Sharp; "and we have got cork jackets, and apparatus's, to make a beginning. But, Sir, as you have the goodness to give me leave to go in a post chaise, I should be excessively happy, Sir," turning to Henry, "if you would do

me the favour, to let me have the honour of your company. I suppose, Sir, there cannot be room for you in the carriage, and I should think it would be much more *agreeabler* to you than riding on horseback."

"I thank you, Sir," replied Henry, "but I prefer riding on horseback."

"Well, now that to me is most amazing," said Mr. Sharp, "that it should be in the *nater* of man to like trouble better than ease, and danger better than being safe; and as for such a snorting, pawing, capering animal as your's, I would not mount him for his worth in gold. I would almost as soon back one of the *peg asses* of former days, that had wings growing from their shoulders."

Mr. Sharp, having thus modestly secured himself a niche among us, was in haste to publish the news at the Vicarage;

where, "Mr. Winterdale has got a carriage, from town," and, "Mr. Winterdale is going to Aberystwith, with all his family," would be canvassed, and turned into every possible form.

Mr. Winterdale proved to his lady, that she had not complimented him on his dispatch, without some reason. That very day he engaged a coachman; on Sunday we went to church, in our new carriage; and on Monday we dined with the Elringtons.

Mr. Winterdale made no further objection to being of the party; but the sufferings of his mind were visible in his looks; and when we were set down at Pentre Hall, which is the name of their place, he was almost in a trepidation. When we entered the drawing room, he made his bows to the family in silence; and it was not

till we had been seated some time, that he assumed courage to tell Mr. Elrington, Lady Winterdale had convinced him it would be for his honour and happiness to live upon friendly terms with his neighbours; he had already put a stop to the contention between that gentleman and himself, and hoped it would be forgotten in a mutual interchange of good offices.

Mr. Elrington shook hands with him heartily, and assured him there was not a man on earth he should be more glad to call his friend; Mrs. Elrington congratulated herself on her good fortune, in acquiring such neighbours, and the Misses Elrington, after overwhelming Eleanor and me with fine speeches, heaped them upon Henry, till he was glad to turn from them, to the plain good sense of their brother.

At dinner, when Mrs. Elrington asked Mr. Winterdale to take a little calves head ash, " Perhaps, my dear," said her husband, " Mr. Winterdale would prefer a bit of chicken." When she asked him to take another bit of chicken, " my dear," said he, " you cram your friends with chicken; I will help Mr. Winterdale to a slice of venison." When Henry asked Mrs. Elrington to take a glass of wine, and she named port, he said, " I wonder at you, my dear; you might be sure the gentleman would have chosen Madeira."

In the course of the visit, my mother mentioned our intended excursion to Aberystwith. Mr. Elrington said he should like to go there, with his family, at the same time. Mrs. Elrington approved the proposal, and added, " Do, let us go."—" But, my dear, how can you go?" was his answer. " Don't

you know we expect the Vaughans? You would not run away from them, would you?"—"Certainly not, replied the obedient wife; "but, perhaps, we could write to them to defer their visit."—"You would not be so rude, surely," said the husband, "as to forbid them your house!"—"Why, no," replied the lady; "I do not know that we could. I believe you are right." —"I believe I generally am, my dear, when you and I happen to differ in opinion," said this married bashaw.

My mother told Mrs. Elrington she should have had great pleasure in her society at Aberystwith, and was sorry that circumstances did not permit them to go. Mrs. Elrington owned it would have been a gratification to her; but Mr. Elrington had convinced her that it was impossible. Her husband said, she need not be so positive; for it did

not amount to an impossibility, neither; and, perhaps the Vaughans might not come till spring. Mrs. Elrington assured him she had not a wish to go to Aberystwith, as it was not agreeable to him; and he concluded by telling her, with a sneer, that she never knew her own mind.

Is the situation of woman such that she must play the tyrant, or become a slave? and is man such an abject creature that he must either domineer or crouch? Cannot two rational beings steer a middle course, in which each should alternately assert its rights, and give them up to the other? I will consult Montgomery on the subject. He does not like the unconditional command and submission of a military life, and, as he does like me, may, perhaps, be content to regard me as an equal. But, believe me, my dear Harriet, in

general, it is not the weakest, but the best, that goes to the wall.

Mr. Winterdale was grave and reserved, during the remainder of the visit; but no longer timid. When Mr. Elrington ventured to aim a jest at him, my mother caught it dextrously, and almost imperceptibly; and sent it back to its author, with the laugh of the company; except once or twice, where the retort was very palpable, she left Mr. Winterdale's defence to himself.

Mr. Francis is a modest, unassuming young man. He felt the gross indignities offered to his mother; but did not think proper to notice them. He sighs for Eleanor. None of these cold-blooded sons of the mountains warm themselves by the fire of my eyes. They catch a gentle spark from her, which increases, by little and little, till it bursts into a flame. It is lucky for

me there are Indian Montgomeries, "near neighbours of the sun," of such combustible natures, that a paltry Will o' the wisp will set them in a blaze.

Instead of two, I have scribbled over four sheets of paper, and have not yet set out for Aberystwith. Pardon me, my dear Harriet, and be assured that, in my next, you shall be conducted thither by

Your

CHARLOTTE MONTGOMERY.

END OF SECOND VOLUME.

J. G. BARNARD, SKINNER-STREET, LONDON.

This book is given special protection for the reason indicated below:

Autograph	Giftbook
Association	Illustration
Condition	Miniature book
Cost	✓Original binding or covers
Edition	Presentation
Fine binding	Scarcity
Format	Subject

L82—5M—3-55—57217